

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

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VEDIC PRAYERS

अर्चस्तवा हवामहेऽर्चतः समिधीमहि ।
अग्ने अर्चत ऊतये ॥

—Rg Veda, 5.13.1

O Agni! We invoke your presence by worshipping you. We kindle you for our protection.

अग्ने स्तोमं मनामहे सिध्ममद्य दिवीस्पृशः ।
देवस्य द्रविणस्यवः ॥

—Rg Veda, 5.13.2

Seeking wealth, we sing such hymns to Agni today as are known to fulfil all desires of human beings. Agni is glorious and, as the Sun, he envelops the sky.

त्वमग्ने सप्रथा असि जुष्टो होता वरेण्यः ।
त्वया यज्ञं वि तन्वते ॥

—Rg Veda, 5.13.4

O Agni! You are always easily pleased; you are the best sacrificer; and you are with us eternally in a gross visible form. Sacrificers obtain your grace and so succeed in their efforts.

Vipassanā and Vedānta

EDITORIAL

The latest *BPS Newsletter*, a newsletter of the Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka, says: 'Today the practice of insight meditation has gained global popularity....' Insight meditation or *vipassanā bhāvanā* is very popular nowadays. But there's something parallel to this Buddhist meditation technique in Hinduism or Vedānta, and our purpose here is to remind you of that method.

Introduction to Vipassanā

The heart and soul of the Buddha's teachings are the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. In these two—the latter consequent of the former—are contained the whole of the Buddhist teaching. The Buddha has gifted the world a huge golden vessel called the *aṭṭhāṅgika māgga* (Pāli) or *aṣṭāṅgika mārga* (Sanskrit), containing the nectar called *nibbāna* (Pāli; Sanskrit, *nirvāṇa*), the state of lasting peace: all are free to taste it. In fact, everyone wants this nectar because all of us are suffering in this world. The Buddha struggled to discover that existence is suffering (or that life is existential misery), that this suffering has a cause which is ignorance (Pāli, *avijjā*; Sanskrit, *avidyā*), that suffering can be eliminated, and that the road to eliminating this suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path.

Ignorance goads us to become deluded by the objects of the world (*moha*)—to either love (*lobha*) or hate them (Pāli, *dosa*). It's ignorance, again, that leads to volition (Pāli, *kamma*; Sanskrit, *karma*). Our actions may be good (*kusala*) or bad (*akusala*). These *kammas* leave impressions on the mind (Pāli, *saṁkhārās*; Sanskrit, *saṁskāras*), which attain fruition (*vipāka*) and lead to volition once again. The chain is endless. So we become bound and suffer. *Avijjā* binds us to the world and we keep on coming and going here, suffering endlessly.

The Buddha discovered a noble path to

freedom from this existential suffering: he gave the Eightfold Path. Of the eight stages that he taught, three are moral teachings (Pāli, *sīla*; Sanskrit, *śīla*); three others are concerned with concentration (*samādhi*), and the remaining two are concerned with supernormal wisdom (Pāli, *paññā*; Sanskrit, *prajñā*). **Morality, concentration, and wisdom are the three thresholds—one leading to the other—to the abode of lasting peace.**

The preliminary virtues like Right Speech (speaking the truth, not hurting, etc), Right Action (non-killing, non-stealing, and doing good to society) and Right Livelihood (leading pious lives) are called **moral virtues**. Though these virtues have been classified as normal (Pāli, *lokiya*) and supranormal (Pāli, *lokuttara*; Sanskrit, *lokottara*), the Buddhist spiritual masters say that practising moral disciplines aren't everything. They may lead to birth in the higher worlds, all right, but we have to come down again. Therefore, we should rise higher. In order to rise higher, the only method is controlling the mind. This leads to concentration.¹

Even in **concentration** or *samādhi*, there are two divisions: worldly absorption (*lokiya*) which leads to absorption in worldly forms (*rūpa-jhānas*), and otherworldly (*lokuttara*), which leads to absorption in the formless (*arūpa-jhānas*). Even this *samādhi* will not suffice, say the Buddhist scholars, because though this may lead to pure lives and to higher worlds, we shall have to come down to the world once again. Secondly, mere concen-

1. Please note that the Buddhist *samādhi* is concentration only, the *dhāraṇā* of yoga. The Buddhist *bhāvanā* is yogic *dhyāna*. And the Buddhist *jhāna* is the lower states of yogic *samādhi*, or absorption.

tration will not help much, because the effects of past actions (*saṃkhārās*), which are in the mind, may become more active. To eliminate them, the attainment of tranquillity (*samātā*) is necessary and vital. Unless wisdom (*paññā*) is attained, ignorance remains and so do the effects of past actions. The only way, therefore, to attain lasting peace, and to be released from suffering, is to attain wisdom. This wisdom, again, is of two types. Worldly wisdom (*lokiya*) is born of learning (Pāli, *sūttamaya-paññā*), reflection, etc. But the *lokuttara* or supramundane wisdom is had only through *vipassanā bhāvanā*. This leads us to *vipassanā*.

What is Vipassanā?

Vipassanā, a meditation technique of Hinayāna, is the Pāli word for the Sanskrit term, *vipaśyana*. *Paś* means 'to see'. The prefix *vi* means that we should look inwards. We should be mindful of every one of our movements and actions. Simply put, it is the art of self-observation. To 'look inward' means to develop insight—to become mindful of every wave of the mind. In short, *vipassanā* is the art of observing everything that we do or think. Sobin S. Namto says in *Wayfaring* (Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka, 1979, p. 6): 'The purpose of training in Vipassana is to know the mind, in its actual condition, moment-to-moment. Training is undertaken to establish the true power of the mind. Its only purpose: the realization of Enlightenment.'

Why is this insight needed? Says Sobin S. Namto: 'Correct practice of Vipassana Meditation is the highest cultivation of the Noble Eightfold Path. ... Mindfulness is our only protection from delusion and suffering in the world.' (*Wayfaring*, p. 20). The Buddha himself says in introducing the *vipassanā* technique: 'This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, and for the attainment of *nibbāna*.'

The Buddha gave an important discourse, called the *Satipatthāna Sūta* (Pāli; Sanskrit, *Smṛti-upasthāna Sūtra*, 'The Hymn of the

Awakening of Consciousness'). In this discourse, included in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha tells his monks that they should go to a solitary place, sit down, and practise the four types of mindfulness. These four are:

1. *Kāyānupassanā*, (Pāli; Sanskrit, *kāya-anupaśyana*, 'meditation on the body'): In this technique comes the famous art of mindfulness of breathing (Pāli, *ānāpānāsati*; Sanskrit, *prāṇāpāna-smṛti*). This is the mindfulness of breathing. Counting mindfully the in-and-out breaths, connecting them, etc, are the methods. Mahasi Sayadaw, the great exponent of *vipassanā* from Burma, has added a new method: of observing the rising and falling of the abdomen along with breathing. Also included in this first method are the mindfulness of walking, talking, hearing, and other bodily functions. The postures of the body, the repulsiveness of the body, and the nine 'cemetery reflections' too are included in this group. This technique, when perfected, will lead to the differentiation between the material and non-material (Pāli, *nāma-rūpa-paricceda-ñāṇa*). Then comes the knowledge that everything is rising and falling, everything is impermanent, and that there is no permanent self here. When this idea of impermanence, suffering, and non-self comes, the way to the attainment of peace, *nibbāna*, has opened.

2. *Vedanānupassanā*, (Pāli; Sanskrit, *vedanā-anupaśyana* 'the mindfulness of feeling'): In this technique, the feelings like desire and aversion, pleasant and unpleasant are observed minutely. Says Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi in *The Noble Eightfold Path* (p. 84): 'Feeling acquires a special importance as an object of contemplation because it is feeling that usually triggers the latent defilements into activity.' So by being mindful of the feelings, we can understand that feelings are not something permanent. This idea of impermanence 'overturns the three unwholesome roots,' greed, delusion, and aversion. This in turn leads to wisdom.

3. *Cittānupassanā*, (Pāli; Sanskrit, *citta-anupaśyana*, 'the mindfulness of consciousness or mind'): Here, the aspirant is asked to concentrate on the various functions of the mind: the

awakening of desires, their dissolution; the awakening of anger, its going; the distraction of the mind, its dissolution, and so on. What happens when we observe the functions of the mind? The waves that arise in the mind are restrained. This could be compared to controlling the modifications of the mind that Patanjali's Yoga teaches.

There may be a doubt here: since Buddhism doesn't advocate the Self or anything permanent beyond the mind, what is it that observes the mind and its activities? Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi answers (*The Noble Eightfold Path*, p. 87): 'As contemplation deepens, the contents of the mind become increasingly rarified. ... At times there might appear to be a persisting observer behind the process, but with continued practice even this apparent observer disappears. The mind itself—the seemingly solid, stable mind—dissolves into a stream of *cittas*, flashing in and out of being moment by moment, coming from nowhere and going nowhere, yet continuing in sequence without pause.' The natural fallout of perfection in this awareness is the attainment of *nibbāna*, release from suffering.

4. *Dhammānupassanā* (Pāli; Sanskrit, *dharma-anupaśyana*, 'the mindfulness of mental objects'): In this final stage of *vipassanā*, the aspirant concentrates on the five mental hindrances (sloth, anger, doubt, lust, greed); the five aggregates of clinging (formation of forms, forms themselves, their perception, feeling arising as a consequence, and the mental reaction to them); the six internal bases of the senses (the roots of eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, and the mind); and finally, the one positive element is the contemplation on the seven factors of enlightenment.

This leads to true wisdom, consequently leading to the attainment of liberation from existential suffering. This is the scheme of *vipassanā bhāvanā*.

The Tradition of Vipassanā

Thus, *vipassanā* is a wonderful technique of observing our body and mind. The purpose of this observation is to know the 'player' behind the play. However, as the Buddhist

becomes perfect in his contemplation, he understands that there is no 'player' behind the play at all! It's all void (Pāli, *suññata*; Sanskrit, *śūnyatā*). This *suññata* is not to be misunderstood as zero or nihilism. It is only an expression to say that everything is transitory or momentary. The goal, then, is to know this truth of *suññata* and thereby become free from suffering.

Though the Buddha had taught *Satipatthāna Sūtra* over 2,500 years ago, except for Burmese Hīnayānists, not many kept this tradition alive. It was owing to the efforts of some Burmese Buddhists—especially Mahasi Sayadaw—that *vipassanā* gained universal popularity. This technique was introduced (or re-introduced!) into India in 1969, thanks to Sri S.N. Goenka—the famous exponent of this art. Though *vipassanā* is a method of spiritual practice, its increasing popularity is more for its worldly benefits: release from mental tensions, attaining peace in worldly life, etc.

The Hindu Vipāśyana

Hinduism is the oldest religion. Its living history is *at least* 7,000 years old. Every form of spiritual and religious practice—prayer, discrimination, meditation, japa, tantra, puja—has been taught in Hinduism. Doesn't this great religion have an equivalent to *vipassanā*? There certainly *are* many equivalents. But we shall attempt discussing only one such in this article, and that, briefly.

The aim of both Buddhist and Vedāntic techniques is the same: to see the 'Player' behind the play. But there is a crucial difference. As we saw above, the Buddhist technique leads to viewing the void (*suññata*) or emptiness. Behind all this enchanting scene that enamours us, there is nothing at all! The Vedānta is positive in approach. It doesn't lead to *śūnyatā* but to *pūrṇatā* or fullness. So all Vedāntic methods of sadhana are aimed at attaining fulfilment or completeness or the Absolute or Brahman. If there is no fulfilment already, how can it be discovered? So the fundamental axiom of Advaita Vedānta is that this enchanting universe and our body and

mind are all false superimpositions on the eternal, positive Self—Ātman or Brahman. But according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, the Player, Brahman, has created our Ātman and the universe, and though both are absolutely dependent on Him, both are real in Him. According to Dvaita, our Selves and the universe have been positively created by God's power. All the systems, however, say that by knowing the Self, we can attain supreme bliss. Sorrow is born of *avidyā* or ignorance. Ignorance makes us get attached to the world. As the *Gītā* (6.23) says, yoga is severance of contact with sorrow. It is the attainment of this yoga that the Vedāntin attempts at. Says the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.1.3): '*Tarati śokam ātmavit*, The knower of the Self alone transcends sorrow.'

There are numerous methods shown by Vedānta of attaining fullness. Of them, the *Kena Upaniṣad* teaches one similar to *vipassanā* (also see *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 4.1). The *Kena Upaniṣad* has four chapters, but the first two chapters are similar to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sūtra* of the Buddha. The *Upaniṣad* teaches the Hindu *vipassanā* in a beautiful way. To make a difficult topic comprehensible, the teacher-and-taught method has been used here also. Just as the Buddha begins his great discourse on the *satipaṭṭhāna* by declaring its purpose and ideals, this *Upaniṣad* too begins by telling the ideal and glory of the goal and the path. For one thing, the Vedāntic method is easier than the Buddhist: because here we needn't have to sit in a solitary place as the Buddha suggested, but can practise enquiry anywhere, at all times—ideally suited to modern times. Again, this method of 'not this' begins with simple questions, like enquiring into what makes us speak or hear or see.

The Advaita Vedānta idea is that the Ātman is enveloped by primordial ignorance; the aspirant after knowledge only unveils it. That is, it is a discovery, or *smṛti-upasthāna*.

The student, desiring knowledge, wants to know the 'Player' behind the play (*Kena Upaniṣad*, 1.1):

Willed by whom does the mind go towards its

objects? Being directed by whom does the vital force proceed towards its duty? Willed by whom does this speech function? Who is it that directs the eyes and ears?

The teacher announces the glory of the Truth (1.2) as the Buddha did in the *Sūtra*:

Since He (the Self) is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of speech, the Life of life, and the Eye of the eye, therefore intelligent people give up identification with them, renounce the world, and become immortal.

The teacher adds (1.3,4):

The eye does not go there, nor speech, nor mind. We do know, so we are not aware of any process of instructing about It. 'That (Brahman) is surely different from the known; and again, It is above the unknown,' said the ancient teachers.

The teacher says later that Brahman is beyond all conceptualization, and all knowing. He also adds that the Ātman is not mere guesswork but has a sound tradition. The teacher also warns the seeker repeatedly that what we usually worship is not the truth (*nedam yadidam upāsate*). What do we generally worship or adore? That which the mind gets attracted to owing to its *saṁkalpa* and *vikalpa* is what we think is real, and we give our whole life to it. The world which deludes us because of our *saṁkalpa* and *vikalpa* is unreal. Our body and mind too belong to this category. Krishna says in the *Gītā* that desires have their source in *saṁkalpa*. With this introduction, the meditations begin.

The Process of Hindu Vipāśyana

The aspirant begins by trying to contemplate on speech and its source. He meditates on a simple question: what makes us speak? Speech represents the organs of action or *kar-mendriyas*. And this naturally leads him to the mind (*manas*). There are other options too: he may meditate as to what is making him hear or see (the sense organs or *jñānendriyas*) and they again lead him to the mind. In the mantras, after the meditation on speech, the mind is introduced suddenly, and then the other organs. *This implies that the mind is considered after meditating on each organ*—hearing, sight,

etc, as each organ can lead us to Truth.

Since the Truth is not the mind, it must be the life-force (*prāṇa*). So, when he knows that mind is just an instrument, he meditates on breath. The seeker concentrates on breathing, and discovers that *prāṇa* or the life-force (not merely breathing) is of course not the Truth, but it leads him towards something beyond—the intellect (*buddhi*). Now he thinks he knows something. This is conceptualization. The teacher removes that. The final obstacle is 'I'-consciousness (*ahamkāra*). The seeker understands that the Truth is beyond 'I', knowing, and unknowing—it's knowledge itself. This leads to supreme knowledge, says the Upaniṣad. This is the scheme.

There are five great mantras, similar to the Buddhist *kāyānupassanā*, beginning with speech and ending with the life-breath (the mantra on the mind suggested after each).

Next, in the second chapter, something similar to *vedanānupassanā* or the contemplation on feeling is given. The *saṃkalpa-vikalpāt-mikā manas* is not the Truth. So the indecisive mind (*manas*) leads the seeker to the decisive factor, the intellect (*buddhi*), and this has to be transcended too. Then comes something similar to *cittānupassanā*—the faculty of memory has to be transcended. Next, the ego or 'I' needs to be conquered. In order to break the concept that the mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*) is the Self, the teacher tells the disciple:

If you think you know Brahman well, you know only the very little expression of It in the human body and the mind. The Truth has still to be deliberated upon by you.

That is, the feeling that 'I know', the conceptualization, is to be given up. The meditation continues now. The disciple now meditates thus: 'I don't think I know Brahman well. Not that I don't know, but I know and don't know as well.' Then comes something equal to *dharmānupassanā*, meditation on the 'thing-in-itself'. The 'I' (*ahamkāra*) is still there. This final obstacle too should be transcended.

The final meditation (2.3) says:

It is known to him to whom It is unknown; he does not know to whom it is known. It is unknown to those who know well, and known to those who do not know.

This meditation is meant to remove all conceptualization. Such concepts are what make us 'individuals', and make us hold on to our little selves. It is these concepts, again, that make us suffer. So, after showing that we are not the body or the mind, the Upaniṣad removes the obstacle of ego also. Through the meditation on this mantra, the disciple understands that the Self is something beyond knowing and unknowing. He understands that behind every state of his being, behind each state of consciousness, it was the Ātman alone that was there, and nothing else. That is knowledge. The aspirant has become the Truth itself; he has attained immortality. In the next mantra (2.4), he declares:

The Self is known when it is known as the Self of each state of consciousness, because thereby one gets immortality.

So just by concentrating on the question of what is the source of speech or hearing or sight, the aspirant has become the knower. All his suffering and weakness are gone. So he says:

Through the Self alone one acquires strength; through knowledge alone one attains immortality.

Having shown the goal and the way, the great *Kena Upaniṣad* (2.5) declares that the Self has to be realized here and now; otherwise, there's immense loss—we shall remain forever bound to falsehood and ignorance:

If one has realized here, then there is truth; if he has not realized here, then there is great destruction. The wise ones, having realized Brahman in all beings, and having turned away from the world, have become immortal.'

The fundamental aim of meditation is to make us free. As the Upaniṣads declare time and again, '*Tarati śokam ātmavit*, The knower of the Self alone overcomes sorrow.' Let's follow the ancient path and become free. □

IMAGES OF INDIA'S PAST

The Life of the Great Durgā Dās

Aurangzib was after Mārwar. Unable to subdue its Mahārājā, Jasovanta Singh Rāthor, who had almost defeated Aurangzib once, the latter had appointed him in responsible positions. Jasovanta died fighting for Aurangzib on 10 December 1678. Seizing the opportunity, Aurangzib captured Mārwar treacherously, and took Jasovanta's family to Delhi. He shouldn't have done that because Jasovanta had died fighting for him. Aurangzib soon learnt that Jasovanta's queen had given birth to a son soon after her husband's death. That boy was named Ajit Singh. As Ajit grew up, his rights were urged before the emperor. But Aurangzib said that the boy should become a Muslim to rule Mārwar. This angered some loyal Rāthors, of whom Durgā Dās was the most powerful, and they wanted to give back Mārwar to the rightful heir, Ajit Singh. Seeing the developments, the alarmed Aurangzib seized Jasovanta's wife's Delhi house to imprison Ajit. In one of the most daring adventures in history, Durgā Dās and a few others managed to take away Ajit Singh and his mother to Mārwar right from the lion's den! Almost all the Rāthors perished fighting Mughals on the way. But Durgā Dās managed to reach Mārwar with them. Baffled, Aurangzib took a milkman's son and proclaimed him to be the true Ajit, meaning that Mārwar was still his. Later, Aurangzib sent his son, Akbar, with a huge army to capture Mārwar. Ajit Singh's mother had been a princess of the neighbouring Mewār. Its king, Rāj Singh, was reeling under the pressure of *jiziya* taxes. So he decided to attack Aurangzib's army. But before he could do that, Aurangzib's general Hasan Ali Khan inflicted heavy defeat upon Mewār, captured Udaipur, and destroyed all the temples there on 22 January 1680. The emperor left Akbar to fight for Mārwar and some army to look after Mewār. The Rājputs of Mewār began guerilla warfare, giving immense trouble to the Mughal troops. Finally, Akbar was defeated by Mahārānā Rāj Singh. Aurangzib was angry with Akbar. Infuriated by his father's insults, Akbar decided to capture Delhi itself! The Rājputs and Durgā Dās said they would support him, as they were all tired of Aurangzib and his *jiziya*. As Akbar proceeded against his father, desertions followed, but 30,000 Rājputs remained most loyal. If the fun-loving Akbar had marched faster, none could save Aurangzib. But he did not. That gave Aurangzib the opportunity to send a false letter, implicating Akbar of treachery against the Rājputs. The letter was dropped near the Rājput camp. When the Rājputs and Rāthors read that Akbar's intention was not fighting his father but taking them to him as prisoners, they were infuriated. The Rājputs left Akbar. Akbar hurried back to Mewār to save himself. But when Durgā Dās learnt that the letter was a trick of Aurangzib, he brought the Rājputs and Rāthors back to Akbar and gave him all support. Durgā Dās once again showed his valour by safely guiding Akbar all the way to southern India, evading the Mughal army. Seizing the opportunity of his absence, Aurangzib occupied Mārwar again. Returning from the south, Durgā Dās struggled hard to place Ajit Singh on the Mārwar throne. Decades of defeats, successes, surrenders and rebellions followed, and finally, when Aurangzib died in March 1707 suffering great humiliation from Rajputs and Rāthors, Ajit Singh defeated the Mughals and freed Mārwar. Durgā Dās' dream came true! (cf. *The Mughal Empire*, ed. R.C. Mazumdar, pp. 238-40, 290-1).

The Internet and the Present and Future of Religion

DR GWILYM BECKERLEGGE

How will religion fare in the Internet age? The author has some positive ideas. Dr Gwilym Beckerlegge is Professor, Department of Religious Studies, The Open University, UK. Apart from other books, he is also the editor of From Sacred Text to Internet, to be released shortly.

For many social theorists in the 19th century, the future of religion seemed clear. It would be unable to withstand the growth of rationalism and the sweeping impact of the technological and social changes that accompanied industrialisation. At that time, the experience of western Europe and the United States seemed to provide a model to which all societies in time would conform, especially when touched directly by the influence of these regions. Other theorists, while not denying the gradual erosion of belief in the supernatural, nonetheless believed that something would need to take the place of religion; a secular substitute that would confer similar benefits in terms of social cohesion. The experience of the 20th century, however, was somewhat different. Religious traditions became trans-national and many of the world's great religions put down roots in new settings. Buddhism is now an American religion just as Islam has British forms. While affiliation to institutionalised Christianity and church attendance declined in many parts of Europe, in the United States it remained far more strongly embedded in the lives of communities. Hinduism saw the growth of movements that accepted members not born into Hindu families and the emergence of a Hindu 'diaspora' as a result of economic migration on a global scale. Whereas once Hindus who crossed the 'black sea' were thought to be lost to the demands of *dharma*, thousands of Hindus have adapted their faith and traditions in new social settings.

Few today would confidently predict that religion is on the verge of dying out. But religion is significantly changing its forms as rapid communication and shared political and economic structures bind the world's population even more tightly together in the global village. Events that a century ago would have taken weeks to travel over any distance are now flashed around the world and reverberate as endless news coverage makes its audience part of the story. The reactions of distant audiences can be fed back within a matter of hours and even exercise a political influence on unfolding events. **What might these changes hold for the present and future of religion? This is a vast question and posing it does not imply revisiting the 19th century speculation about the demise of religion.** Instead, it is intended to trigger some thoughts about a change already in progress that has the potential to exert a considerable impact on the way in which people both practise and think about religion and think religiously.

Writing in 1998 about the festival of Durga Puja, a journalist lamented '...one has to move with the times. Presumably, the pujas [worship/festival] will no longer be the same again.' What he was talking about was a festival that had become 'gloriously online'.¹ By visiting Internet web sites through their computers, devotees and observers could watch and even participate in the festival through

1. R. Bannerjee, 'Victory Parade' in *India Today International*, 12 October 1998, p. 34.

their screens. For Calcuttans living far from their native city, the advantages of such a possibility may seem obvious and certainly better than taking no part in the festival at all. What the report was really getting at, however, was the modest trend that had already emerged in the space of a year relating to the amount of Internet access to the celebrations of Durga Puja, and where that might lead. Individuals, who can afford to do so, have come to rely increasingly on the electronic screen out of professional necessity and for entertainment, education, information, commerce and banking. Might devotees decide in larger and larger numbers to log on to their computers during the festival season and so save themselves the inconvenience of the crowds, traffic jams and noise? Anyone who knows Calcutta and its attachment to Durga Puja may well have concluded that such speculation is highly premature, to say the very least. **But the report did note that several million visits had been made to the Internet sites devoted to Durga Puja, whereas only a year or two before there had not even been a site to visit.** This, of course, is typical of the rapidly moving world of the Internet.

The Internet was created in the United States at the end of the 1960s as a computer network linking together academic researchers and defence workers. Its use, however, has been transformed since the 1980s with the advent of the personal computer, or microcomputer, and the creation of the World Wide Web — the global computer system linking text, graphics, sound and video. Now that the computer can carry the Internet into peoples' homes, the range of interests represented on this network has also expanded greatly. Those who want to bring their products, services or message to a global audience/market as quickly as possible and with minimum outlay, all resort to the Internet. This is no less true of religion.²

At its simplest, a religious web site on the Internet can function as nothing more than a rather sophisticated notice board. This

can hardly be said to mark a radical new departure for religious organization and behaviour, although it immediately raises the question of who is in a position to gain access to this new resource. Yet, even at this relatively simple level, this manifestation of religion on the Internet brings something new with it in terms of speed of interactive communication, global outreach, and the potential for sophisticated multimedia design. For dispersed religious communities—Hindus in Britain, Sikhs in Canada, Hasidic Jews in the United States, to name but a few examples—web sites can generate a sense of closer connection to the faith as a whole. They may also prove to be valuable resource centres in the religious nurture of the young and indeed for adults cut off from the major centres of their faith or from religious authorities to whom they would turn for advice. Others wishing to learn about these faiths—scholars and others with their own reasons for studying religion—may also find

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2. Good starting points for sampling religious web sites are the web site maintained and updated by: (a) Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion (<http://www.wabashcenter.wabsh.edu/Internet/front.htm>) and (b) the ROUTES collection of web sites maintained and updated by the Open University library (<http://www.oulib1.open.ac.uk>).

Comprehensive (but not updated) surveys of religious web sites are provided by: (a) M.A. Keller, *God on the Internet* (Foster City: IDG Books, 1996), and (b) B.B. Lawrence, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Religions Online* (Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 2000).

For new religious movements, including neopaganism, see: (a) Zenzibar Alternative Culture Directory (<http://www.zenzibar.com/beta/directory.asp?cat=R>) and (b) T. Cottee, N. Yateman and L. Dawson, 'NRMs, the ACM, and the WWW: A Guide for Beginners' in *Cults in Context: Readings in the Study of New Religious Movements*, ed. L.L. Dawson (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

these web sites valuable sources of information. **These kinds of web sites can range in scale from being merely a series of notices and a contact address to being mini-libraries.** A person browsing a complex web site may be able to access vast amounts of texts, see pictures and video sequences, listen to the sounds of the faith, and be passed through links to other related web sites.

If a web site can offer religious texts and the sights and sounds of religion, does it have to restrict itself to being merely an information point? This question takes us closer to the heart of this discussion, which is concerned with the ways in which the use of the Internet might change religious behaviour and thought. There are already numerous web sites designed to prompt interactive engagement rather than simply to relay information, although this line soon becomes blurred when one considers web sites that remind Muslims of the daily times of prayer and relay the *hukumnama* to Sikhs. Religious teachers in many religions currently maintain web sites through which their followers can access their recent pronouncements, consult the teacher and receive blessing. **There are Christian web sites that enable individuals to make confession and also encourage remote participation in daily acts of prayer.** In those religious traditions in which the study of sacred scripture is a central obligation, the Internet provides a forum for global study, discussion and prayer groups. Finally, however, we come to those web sites that offer an act of worship in which the individual visitor to the web site can follow and join at any point of the day. This kind of provision is currently associated typically with so-called 'virtual (or electronic) churches' in North America. Just as Durga Puja has been celebrated 'online', so too has the Jewish festival of Passover. All of these activities—prayer, worship, participation in a festival—provoke questions both about the direction and authenticity of this kind of electronic religious practice.

For religious leaders, the accelerating use

of computers for religious purposes poses some difficult questions. The freedom to 'browse' a religion in privacy and at a convenient time and pace may well bring individuals into closer contact with, and even membership of, a religion when a less remote first contact might have deterred them. For religious individuals who lead busy lives, being able to log on to their computer and participate in a religious activity at a time of their choosing may also be convenient and beneficial, although for some it may also raise a question about priorities. But more than anything else, the growing use of this technology for interactive religious purposes begs question about the extent to which the central rituals of a faith can be conducted at a distance by the recognised religious officiant and then accessed via a computer. Again, it is evident that this opens up the possibility of a previously undreamed of level of religious participation for remote and dispersed communities, but is there a loss in the process? The practical advantages for remote communities are often acknowledged by the same religious specialists, for example, priests and rabbis, who are generally enthusiastic about the use of the Internet. But, one soon finds reservations expressed about whether it is possible to offer true pastoral care at a distance and, indeed, whether the most central and sacred rituals of the faith can be performed authentically in this manner.

The Internet allows all those who are able to access and work on it potentially equal platforms from which to speak to a global audience. The relocation of religious activities such as worship on the Internet hints at future changes in the role and importance of religious institutions. So too, the debate about the role of religious teachers and the extent to which they can offer pastoral care electronically suggests that **the coming of religion on to the Internet may lead to a sweeping change in attitudes to traditional religious authorities.** For example, it has already become evident that remote Muslim web sites that offer religious and moral advice have re-

ceived and have responded in a similar vein to questions couched in a frankness that has not previously characterised relationships between young Muslims and local imams. **So, in the world of the Internet, it may be that religious inquirers will go to the site that delivers the message they want to hear, regardless of whether the source behind it is an acknowledged religious authority, a religious dissident or merely a sympathetic respondent on the other side of the world.**

The changes already in train and their possible implications, which we have touched on so briefly in this article, constitute major and long-term challenges to the leaders and teachers of the world's religions. **For, although there are literally thousands of religious sites already established on the Internet, religious leaders have offered relatively little guidance about how this new medium should be used.** In some countries religious conservatives have blocked or banned the use of the Internet, often more for political reasons than for the religious reasons nominally put forward to justify this censorship. The Internet is also rife with hate sites. This has prompted more systematic reflection on the use of the Internet on the part of some most at risk from the dangers of racism and the other forms of hate directed against religious groups or those defined by sexual orientation. The uncontrolled environment that is the Internet also places explicitly pornographic web sites, not to mention the lure of rampant consumerism, within a click of the computer button, whether the operator is nine or ninety. **The issue of censorship and control, therefore, has been high on the agenda of some religious groups, particularly in the United States where any move to censor access to the Internet has become bound up in fierce debate about the guarantee of personal freedom enshrined in the American Constitution.**

Religions have much to gain from taking the risk of becoming major players on the Internet, it has been argued. First, there are all the advantages that we have noted in our

discussion of using the world's most powerful medium of communication: its global outreach, the sophistication of its design capabilities, and the flexibility and access it offers to both remote groups and busy individuals. Second, it gives visibility to religion at one of the cutting edges of contemporary technology. Yet, at the present time ownership of personal computers is concentrated in the world's wealthiest regions and the vast majority of existing religious web sites have been devised in North America and thus are Christian in outlook. Moreover, although many languages are used on the Internet, to date English has been the universal language of the computer world, together with the capacity to translate into other European languages. Although the Internet can currently provide an affluent, computer-literate teenager a global platform, access to the Internet comes through wealth, a general knowledge of Information Technology applications, and, for the most part, English. **The rate of connections to the Internet accelerates every year but for some time to come it would seem that those who utilise this medium will constitute in effect a new religious elite.**

Perhaps most challenging of all is not so much the way in which the development of the Internet and its successors may force changes in the ways religious institutions operate, but rather the changes it may stimulate in the way in which people think religiously. The creation of cyberspace, the world behind the screen through which cybernauts 'travel', appears to have added a new dimension to human experience, if not to currently held conceptions of 'reality'. The linking of humans to computers—the carbon to the silicon-based organism—similarly extends the frontiers of what might in future constitute the individual, particularly if implants become more common in clinical treatments. But the sheer magnitude of the Internet has also provided some religious thinkers with new ways in which to symbolise God and to draw analogies between the

(continued on p. 261)

Reminiscences of Swami Shivananda - 2

SWAMI HIRANMAYANANDA

Srimat Swami Hiranmayanandaji is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and a member of the Board of Trustees, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. His memoirs of his guru, Srimat Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj, was published in the Bengali book, Shivananda-Smriti Sangraha. We published the first part of a free translation of these memoirs last month. This is the concluding part.

I was narrating my contacts with my guru, Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj (Mahapurush Maharaj). I remember the incident that happened one day. A monk by name Swami Madhusudananandaji would come to Shivanandaji's room and sit there on a chair. He had been a householder in his pre-monastic days, and in old age had received monastic vows from Mahapurush Maharaj. As soon as I entered Mahapurush Maharaj's room and saluted him, he said: 'Salute him also,' and pointed towards Madhusudananandaji. When I saluted him also, the old Madhusudananandaji said: 'I want to see you properly.' Mahapurush Maharaj said: 'Go stand before him.' When I did, that old monk rolled his right palm in the form of a binocular and kept it near his eyes. He remarked: 'Good boy.' Mahapurush Maharaj too nodded and said: 'Yes, he's a good boy.' Hearing this, I did not feel any sort of pride at all. But I was relieved that after all my life was going on in the right direction. Later, Swami Gangeshanandaji (Mahapurush Maharaj's secretary) pointed towards me and told Shivanandaji: 'Maharaj, this boy wishes to become a monk.' I had spoken to Shivanandaji about this already. So he knew about my wish. He replied to Gangeshanandaji: 'Yes, I know he will become a monk.' Listening to Mahapurush Maharaj's words, Gangeshanandaji was wonder-struck.

I had a classmate by name Tarapada Chakraborty. He stood first in the matriculation exam. His house was in Barasat, near

Calcutta. His father was Lahiri Mahashay's (Shyamacharan Lahiri) disciple, and had a fanciful idea that he could judge the spirituality of people. I met him once and told him, 'Come on, tell me how much spirituality a certain person has.' The next day I took him by steamer to Belur Math and made him enter Mahapurush Maharaj's room. I was standing outside and watching everything. The moment he made pranams to Maharaj, the latter asked him where his house was. The gentleman replied: 'Barasat.' Hearing this, Maharaj pointed towards his own body and said: 'This also is from Barasat,' and laughed aloud. When that gentleman came out, I enquired: 'What spirituality did you see?' He replied: 'I couldn't understand the spirituality—but I haven't seen such a smile elsewhere.' Really Mahapurush Maharaj's smile was unique—a smile which would fill the hearts of viewers with joy.

One more incident. A boy from our area wanted to receive spiritual initiation. He saluted Maharaj and expressed his wish. Mahapurush Maharaj enquired: 'Who knows you around?' He told my name. Fortunately I was at the Math that day. I was called. When I came, Maharaj asked: 'Do you know him?' 'Yes, I do.' 'How's the boy?' I replied: 'Good.' He was initiated. I observed one thing: though Maharaj would address me as 'Malda' (since I hailed from Malda town), he also remembered the place I was born. What compassion!

I began staying overnight at the Math. One day Mahapurush Maharaj fed the monks

with the *mahāprasāda* of Kalighat. The next morning, when I met him, Maharaj enquired: 'How was it yesterday?' I replied: 'Very nice, Maharaj.' He remarked: 'Yes, it's good to eat well sometimes.' He then turned to Gangeshanandaji and enquired: 'How was it?' Gangeshanandaji said: 'Of course tasty. But it was less.' Mahapurush Maharaj said in Hindi: 'No problem. It can be arranged once more.' So some days later he fed monks with sweets. He would thus try to feed the monks with good food.

There was a tall person living in the Math. Occasionally, when Shivanandaji Maharaj would show him some vegetable, he would remark: 'Fine, brother, fine!' He was a fine gentleman and looked after the vegetable garden of the Math.

One day, the famous hockey player Dhyanachand brought his Jhansi Heroes team to Calcutta. In those days, Customs team was famous. So my friend Sachin Mazumdar, myself and Swami Gangeshanandaji decided to witness the match between the two teams. Myself and Sachin would wait at an appointed place and Gangeshanandaji was to meet us there. From there we were to go to the stadium. Gangeshanandaji did not come. So we both went and witnessed the match from the gallery. It was a remarkable play. Jhansi Heroes defeated Customs 2-1. After the match I telephoned Gangeshanandaji from the YMCA. Why didn't he come? He replied: 'Oh, something very sad has happened. Mahapurush Maharaj has suffered a stroke and is bed-ridden. Come here tomorrow morning itself.' I agreed. I went to the Math the next morning. A brahmachari was standing in front of Maharaj's room. He did not allow me to enter inside. Seeing me from upstairs, Gangeshanandaji said: 'Come up here.' Again I tried to enter Mahapurush Maharaj's room; a monk stopped me now. I went to Swami Gangeshanandaji. By that time the monk too had come there. I told Gangeshanandaji, pointing towards the monk: 'He is not allowing me to go to Mahapurush Maharaj.' That monk was Su-

rya Maharaj (Swami Nirvananandaji, who later became one of the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Order). Both Surya Maharaj and Gangeshanandaji were friends. Gangeshanandaji told me: 'He's here now. Go, make pranams and return.' I went to Maharaj's room and saw him totally unconscious. I slowly saluted him and returned.

I shall narrate an earlier incident now. One day I asked Mahapurush Maharaj: 'Maharaj, how are you?' He turned to his attendant, Moti Maharaj, who was nearby and asked: 'How am I, O Moti?' Moti Maharaj responded: 'Pulling on somehow.' Maharaj also told the same thing: 'Pulling on somehow.' The idea was, the good and bad of the body was nothing for him.

Seeing Mahapurush Maharaj in this unconscious state, one day I felt very bad. That moment I decided I should join the Order. But Sudhir Maharaj (Swami Shuddhanandaji, who later became the President of the Order) said: 'You come after completing your MA exams.' I replied: 'I don't want to delay anymore.' Swami Gangeshanandaji too was present there. He told Shuddhanandaji for fun: 'What do you know of studies?' Shuddhanandaji said: 'Ah, as if I don't know anything about studies. Who else knows?' Gangeshanandaji replied: 'Swami Nirvedanandaji does.' Myself, Gangeshanandaji and Shuddhanandaji Maharaj went to Dumdum, where Nirvedanandaji was living then in the Students' Home. We saluted him. He heard about my desire to join the Order, and said: 'When he wants to become a monk, what's the need of a degree?' Revered Sudhir Maharaj did not object anymore. We returned to the Math.

I have narrated already how I told Mahapurush Maharaj that I had joined the Order, and how he said: 'M-m-m'.

Soon after I joined the Order, Bharat Maharaj (Swami Abhayanandaji) gave me the job of serving some 4-5 patients. One day Shuddhanandaji told me: 'You'll have to go to Orissa for relief work.' To serve so many pa-

tients had been difficult for me, so I was relieved to hear this. I told Bharat Maharaj: 'I shall have to go for relief work.' Bharat Maharaj got irritated and said: 'Let Sudhir Maharaj appoint someone for serving patients then.' Surya Maharaj came to my rescue: 'You go; I shall take care of that work.'

It was Durga Puja time. Mahapurush Maharaj was taken to Mother Durga on a chair. He expressed happiness having Her *darshan*. I went to his room one day. He was trying to say something, waving his left hand, to his attendant, Swami Apurvanandaji. Apurvanandaji asked him: 'Do you want to drink water?' Maharaj shook his head in the negative. Then Apurvanandaji enquired: 'Are you searching for Keshav (Swami Akshayanandaji)?' Mahapurush Maharaj's face brightened up. He nodded in the affirmative. Swami Apurvanandaji said: 'They have sent Keshav to Madras.' Hearing this, Mahapurush Maharaj's face became dark. His love for his disciples was so great.

Anyway, Swami Shraddhanandaji and myself left for Orissa on Lakshmi Puja day, and reached the spot by a bullock cart. There was a jungle on all sides. Even leopards and tigers lived there and we could hear their cries occasionally. Hyenas were seen roaming about in broad daylight. After doing relief work for about 3-4 months, I went to Ramakrishna Math, Bhubaneswar. Surya Maharaj was then the president of the Ashrama. At Bhubaneswar, we began studying scriptures under Dineshchandra Tarkatirtha (now, Dineshchandra Sastri). We studied *Tarka Samgraha*, *Artha Samgraha* and some Upanishads under him. I was told to worship Sri Ramakrishna here. This was how my days were spent at the centre built up by Swami Brahmanandaji.

One day I noticed Surya Maharaj getting ready to go somewhere. I asked him, 'Where are you going?' He said: 'Mahapurush Maharaj is seriously ill. I am going to Belur Math to see him.' When I expressed my desire to go with him, he said: 'Let me go and see him first;

then I shall inform you.' I became restless to go to the Math and wrote to Gangeshanandaji: 'I feel very anxious to go to the Math. But I am not able to do so.' Gangeshanandaji replied by sending a telegram: 'Come immediately, though he's sinking.' I prayed the whole night on the train so that I might see Mahapurush Maharaj alive. I reached Howrah station early morning. I saw a devotee at the station and enquired about Maharaj. He said: 'I saw him this morning and found him all right.' I was overjoyed and reached the Math. I had my breakfast with a happy mind, and heard soon that Dr Ajitnath Roychoudhury had said: 'There's no hope.' He was to give up his body two or three hours later. I stood in front of Shivanandaji Maharaj's room and began observing him. I observed that his chest swelled with each breath. Suddenly he pressed his lips, opened them, again pressed them tighter. He stopped breathing. I read in the *Udbodhan*, Chaitra, 1380 BE number later: 'Forcefully he did *kumbhaka* and held the breath—lips tightly pressed together. He as if threw death with force. With the darkness of death gone, the forehead was peacefully calm, as if in samadhi. Again his lips moved slightly. He once more forced his vital breath (*prāṇa*) to the *brahma-randhra*. "At the time of death, having fully fixed the Prāṇa between the eyebrows with an unswerving mind, and being imbued with devotion as also the strength of concentration, he reaches that resplendent supreme Person" (*Gītā*, 8.10). We had seen the disease-worn body of Swami Subodhanandaji (Khoka Maharaj) during his last moments. There was a big smile at the vision of the Beloved. Here it was different: "Having controlled all the passages, having confined the mind in the heart, and having fixed his own vital force in the head, (and then) continuing in firmness in yoga, he who departs by leaving the body while uttering the single syllable Om which is Brahman, and thinking of Me, he attains the supreme Goal" (*Gītā*, 8.12-13).'

Having read this in *Udbodhan*, I realized that whatever I had seen then was real. That

is, he had left his body in the state of samadhi. Later, he was shaved, bathed and kept in the room below the shrine. Everyone offered flowers at his feet. I too did that. I saw a beautiful scene soon. Swami Abhedanandaji held flowers in his hands and said: '*Vande mahāpuruṣa te caraṇāravindam*, I salute your holy feet, O great soul.' The holy body was then laid for funeral ceremony. The cremation took place where other direct disciples of Sri

Ramakrishna had been cremated. When the body was being placed for cremation, I felt a sort of pain in my heart and I left the place.

Fortunate I am that I could get a great soul like Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj as my spiritual guide. When I think of this in this old age, I feel like saying in the words of the *Gītā*: '*Hṛsyāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ*, I rejoice again and again' (18.77). □

The Internet and the Present and Future of Religion

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multimedia texts of the World Wide Web and interpreting the many layers of a sacred text. **If the Internet represents one of the pinnacles of human technological achievement through its vast capacity to gather, organise and communicate information, it also paradoxically stands simultaneously as a reminder of the limitations of the individual.** In putting the Internet to work, it would seem that its religious users have just begun to reflect both upon where the Internet may lead them and the questions its arrival leads them

to ask about their own humanity. □

Glossary

- cybernaut* One who explores *cyberspace*
- cyberspace* The world behind the screen created by the computer
- Internet* Interconnected, global computer networks connected by telephone lines
- online* Connected to the Internet
- virtual reality* The 'reality' generated electronically by the computer
- the web* Abbreviation of World Wide Web
- web site* A location on the World Wide Web; for example, a web page

How to Make Our Lives Fruitful?

In order to make our life fruitful we must remedy all unhealthy elements. The three elements—doubt, anguish, and fear—are spiritual disorders. They create tremendous chaos in our life. When these possess us, whatever little faith we have is lost, and whatever little love we feel like giving to others we are hesitant to give for fear we may lose. Why do we have anguish? Because we have not enough faith in the Divine; we are always doubting, always fearful. Until we get rid of these detrimental conditions, we cannot have true healthfulness in life.

—Swami Paramananda

Jalaluddin Rumi

Please read this wonderful life of a great saint. Not many educated people are there in India today who haven't heard of Jalaluddin Rumi. This beautiful article about the great Sufi has been re-written from the Bengali original by Sri Bishnupada Roy, published in the now defunct Bengali monthly Bharatavarsha (Magh, 1338).

In the history of Islam, along with Prophet Muhammad, one more name shall remain for ever. He was with the Prophet in his happiness and difficulties, he was his greatest aide, he was a right hand to the Prophet in all work. His name is Abubakr Siddique. Abubakr remained with his master in pain and misery, amidst fear of death, at all times. He occupied the seat of the Prophet and was venerated by all. It was in this family that Rumi was born. Jalaluddin's father and grandfather were both renowned for their noble lives. The grandfather of Rumi, Hussain, was a famous Sufi. His wife was a princess, daughter of a king who was a contemporary of Chengiz Khan and who was defeated by the latter. Hussain's son and the father of Jalaluddin Rumi was Bahauddin; he was such a well-known Sufi that people from different parts of the country would crowd his house to hear him speak. Amongst the hundreds who would assemble everyday, the defeated king and grandfather of Bahauddin too would be one at times. But the king could not tolerate Bahauddin's fame and began to ill-treat him in many ways. Unable to withstand this any longer, Bahauddin left the country once and for all with his son in 1212 AD. Jalaluddin was then six years old. The family initially came to Nishapur to reside there. During that period, the famous Sufi Fariduddin Attar was living in Nishapur. It is said that Attar saw the child Rumi and blessed him thus, 'This hidden jewel will one day enlighten the world with his brilliance.' The homeless family next went to Baghdad, thence to Mecca, and from there to Larenda. In Larenda, Bahauddin got a teacher's job. After having lived for seven

years there, the family finally moved to Asia Minor upon the invitation of the king there. Asia Minor was called Rum during those days. It was from this that Jalaluddin got the name Rumi.

Jalaluddin was born in 1207 in the town called Balkh in Korasan. His father was Jalal's teacher. After some time, Bahauddin handed over the responsibility of training his son to one of his brilliant disciples, Burhauddin. It is said that this Burhauddin was the teacher and spiritual director of Jalaluddin. After all the tours which fate took them on, Jalaluddin went to Syria for higher education. Damascus and Aleppo in Syria were well known as centres of learning during the period. Jalaluddin went to Aleppo and studied under Kamaluddin. Later, he went to Damascus also and studied there. It is said that Jalal became a master in all the texts of Islam. His *Masnawi* is a proof of this. Jalal returned to Kauniya in Rum at the age of 40, a scholar of great value. But till now, Jalal was a scholar, studying and arguing like other scholars. The fire of love for God had not yet manifested itself in him till then. It was his contact with the Sufi Sams-i Tabriz that brought about a wonderful transformation in him.

There are a number of wonderful stories about the first meeting between Sams-i Tabriz and Jalaluddin. Most of them are so unnatural that they can't be accepted. But we narrate one. One day Jalaluddin was teaching his students, and there were scores of books lying around him. A dervish came to him then and asked him, 'What is there in all these books?' Jalaluddin replied, 'How can you understand what these books contain?' Instantly the books

began to burn. Jalaluddin asked, 'What is this?' Smiling, the dervish replied, 'How can you understand what is there in this?' This was how a great transformation came by in Jalaluddin.

The famous traveller, Ibn Batutah, visited Kauniya and saw Rumi's grave. What all he heard from people and what all he himself witnessed there he has recorded in his travelogue. What he had heard about Shams-i Tabriz is this: One day, a person who sold sweets on a trolley came to Rumi and sold him a huge quantity of sweets. As soon as Rumi ate them, he became like one mad and absconded. Even after he returned after a few years, he would not speak to anyone. He would only recite poems. These poems were later called *Masnawi*. And the seller of sweets was Shams-i Tabriz. Ibn Batutah noticed that in Kauniya, people venerated *Masnawi* like the Koran itself.

What Rumi's disciple Sepasalar writes about that incident is something different; there is nothing supernatural about it at all. He writes that Shams wasn't like ordinary Sufis. No one could guess that he had attained something high in spirituality by seeing him. He came to Kauniya, having received God's command. Both Jalaluddin and Shams met in a shop. After some small talk, Jalaluddin got attracted to him and became his disciple. After this, Jalaluddin gave up the teaching profession and, along with Shams, would stay in lonely places, forsake food and pray to God. Everyone started commenting that a madman came from somewhere and made such a great scholar like Rumi mad, too. His disciples also became angry. Seeing all this, Shams left Kauniya without telling anything to anybody. This parting was extremely painful to Rumi. After many days, Shams wrote a letter from Damascus. Rumi's son Sultan Walad took many disciples with him and went to Damascus to bring Shams back to Kauniya. For the second time, Shams stayed in Kauniya for about two years. It is said by all of Jalaluddin's biographers except Sepasalar that Shams was

murdered by Jalaluddin's disciples. It was after this that Jalaluddin's poetic talent flowered more brightly. Once when Halaku Khan's commander Bechu Khan attacked Kauniya, it is said that Jalaluddin went to the forefront, climbed up a hillock and started praying. His daring made the enemy give up attacking this city.

After the demise of Shams, Jalaluddin was greatly pained and would roam about in anguish. One day he came near a goldsmith's shop. The goldsmith was none other than Rumi's father's disciple, Salahuddin. Salahuddin was also a Sufi who ran this goldsmith's shop for a living. Now when Rumi passed by that shop, he heard the rhythmic sound of the hammer beating gold. Rumi, in his ecstatic mood, thought that it was a percussion instrument playing and began to dance to its tune. The dance continued for hours—the hammer didn't stop striking and Jalaluddin didn't stop dancing. Seeing Rumi's devotion, Salahuddin came and fell at his feet. Rumi embraced Salahuddin warmly. Since that day, Salahuddin took the place of Shams in Rumi's life.

Rumi's disciples and son were against Rumi's having close contact with the unlettered Salahuddin. In one of his poems, Rumi's son sang thus: 'We ousted Tabriz somehow and thought that my father's love would end. But now we see he is attached to an unlettered lowborn. And all his disciples are discussing this now!' However, the teacher wasn't after Salahuddin seeing his outside. What after all has dry knowledge to do in the domain of love? Times change; after some years, Sultan Walad, Rumi's son, married Salahuddin's daughter. Rumi always wanted someone, an aspirant specially, to shower his pure love on. So when Salahuddin passed away, his love was showered on his disciple Hesamuddin. In Sufi sadhana, a close companion is a must; so the saint had companions one after the other. It was owing to Hesamuddin's importunate appeals that Rumi agreed to compose *Masnawi*. He would no doubt sing songs of *Masnawi* earlier but it wasn't written down.

In the year 1273 there was a great epidemic in Kauniya. Everyday, many people began to die. At last, the helpless citizens of the city came to Jalaluddin. Jalaluddin told them that the earth has become hungry. Give her proper food and she will be appeased. What the food was, was understood very soon. Within days, Jalaluddin himself fell ill. The best doctor of those days, Akamuddin, himself came to treat the saint. When the news of Jalaluddin's disease spread, people from all walks of life came daily to visit him. Rich and poor, everybody was concerned. The famous scholar, Sadaruddin, came with his disciples to Kauniya in order to serve Jalaluddin. He started praying to God for Jalaluddin's speedy recovery. Jalaluddin said, 'Friend, why all this? What else is needed? Let this filmsy barrier between the lover and the Beloved go. Let light become one with Light.' Everyone understood that the final moments had come. Someone asked who would be his successor. Rumi said that Hesamuddin would succeed him. Though the saint's son himself was a great sufi, Rumi appointed Hesamuddin. Jalaluddin knew that he owed 50 gold coins to somebody. He told his son to sell all that was there and repay the person. That person was present there itself. He said, 'You need not pay; you are free from debt.' Then Rumi requested Sadaruddin to recite the last prayer. That evening, Rumi gave up his body. The next morning, when the body was being taken to the burial ground, even Christians and Jews came with the procession and with tears in their eyes, read their holy books. Thousands of people followed the body. The badshah himself was there. The crowd became so huge that it was impossible to take the body to its final resting place until evening. Thus ended the great life of a saint.

Just as Bengali Vaishnava poets brought about a cultural renaissance in Bengali literature, the Sufis gave a depth, beauty, and mys-

tical bent to Arabic literature. Of all the Sufis, Jalaluddin Rumi holds a unique position. He is generally known as Moulana Rumi.

In Rumi's life and poems, the spirituality of Sufism has blossomed in all its glory. Rumi's songs are not only the finest expressions of divine love disguised as human but at times one doubts whether at least some are translations of Bengali Baul songs. The renunciation that Jalaluddin exemplified in his life wins every heart that reads him. The glorious life which he led is possible only to him and to people of his class. We can say that Jalaluddin is one of the finest poets the world has produced. Rumi has been translated into numerous European languages. The German philosopher Hegel has praised Rumi in no uncertain terms. D. von Rojenburg translated Rumi's *Dewana* for the first time in 1838. Redhouse translated *Masnawi* into English in 1881. That was only the beginning. Later, so many people have studied Sufism in general and Rumi in particular.

Scholars have not given much details about Jalaluddin Rumi's family life. However, it is known that at the age of 20, he married Khatun, the daughter of Lala Sarafuddin. He had two sons. Of them, Sultan Walad wrote the *Darbarnama*. In it, there are several things mentioned about Jalaluddin. Rumi has created a new path for the Sufis. During Ibn Batutah's travels, the followers of this path were known as Jalalias. In Asia Minor and some other places, this group was called Moulaviya. The speciality of this group is the circular group dance. Jalaluddin was, as we said, a great pundit. But after his meeting Shams-i Tabriz, his life got transformed and he was merely a devotee later on, practising japa, meditation, prayer, etc. Nothing of this world interested Rumi. He received 15 gold coins from the court and that ran his household.

Rumi's works have become immortal today. □

The Nature of the Problem

PROF DIKSHIT GUPTA

In our series on popularizing philosophy, we have Dr Dikshit Gupta, Professor and Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Calcutta, presenting his views.

The advancement of technology has completely altered the cultural climate of the world. The result is that such disciplines as philosophy smother gradually. This is the picture brought out by the condition of the philosophy department of the academic institutions of the day which with their vacant seats bear a gloomy testimony to this sickly state of affairs. It is a real discomfiture for all lovers of philosophy.

It is now increasingly felt that philosophy has no use. Utility has now been the criterion by which the merit of a discipline is judged. And it is a fact that philosophy does not succeed in the way information technology does. But did philosophy ever claim to have the kind of utility that technology has? So there can be no question of effacing philosophy from the curriculum on the ground that it has outlived its utility. Why, then, is philosophy fast losing its attraction?

It is true that philosophy had been rather esoteric. It is not surprising that the idea should prevail among common people that philosophy deals with the transcendental that lies far beyond the bounds of sense. This idea is not wrong. But very few of the common people are aware of the turn that philosophy has taken in the last century. Philosophy now addresses itself to problems that are strictly confined to the empirical world.

We do not intend to say that philosophy can rub shoulders with science and technology. But that does not make philosophy irrelevant to us. We should be very careful here. We must not confuse between the concept of relevance and that of pragmatic value or utility.

There are certain basic intellectual needs of ours to which attention of the students must be drawn. The human intellect has a natural propensity to go deep into what appear to be pedestrian facts of life. To take an example: we know things; knowledge-claims are frequently found to be empty. This is because we are not sure about the source of our knowledge and also the conditions of its validity. This brings us to the arena of philosophy.

The above is just an example which tells us that a student of philosophy must be shown that his problems really emerge from the facts of life. Thus philosophy can be brought down to earth. As a matter of fact philosophy has now gone deeper into real life. The emphasis on socio-political issues which include moral philosophy is more pronounced today than ever. How to build up an ideal society? What should be our moral values? Very much like political philosophy, ethics now is not confined to textbooks. Ethical philosophers have been invited to have their say on different issues of our practical life. Should we encourage killing in any form? Can we justify global war? Should the affluent consider it to be his duty to share his food with those who are hungry? Should we allow thoughtless destruction of our environment?

Let us look at the world at large. It is now divided into fragments. Aggression and violence are rampant. The concept of the 'universe' is hopelessly lost. We believe that philosophy now is more relevant than ever. Philosophy alone can restore the unity which the present world lacks so sadly.

(continued on p. 268)

A Pilgrimage to the New World

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

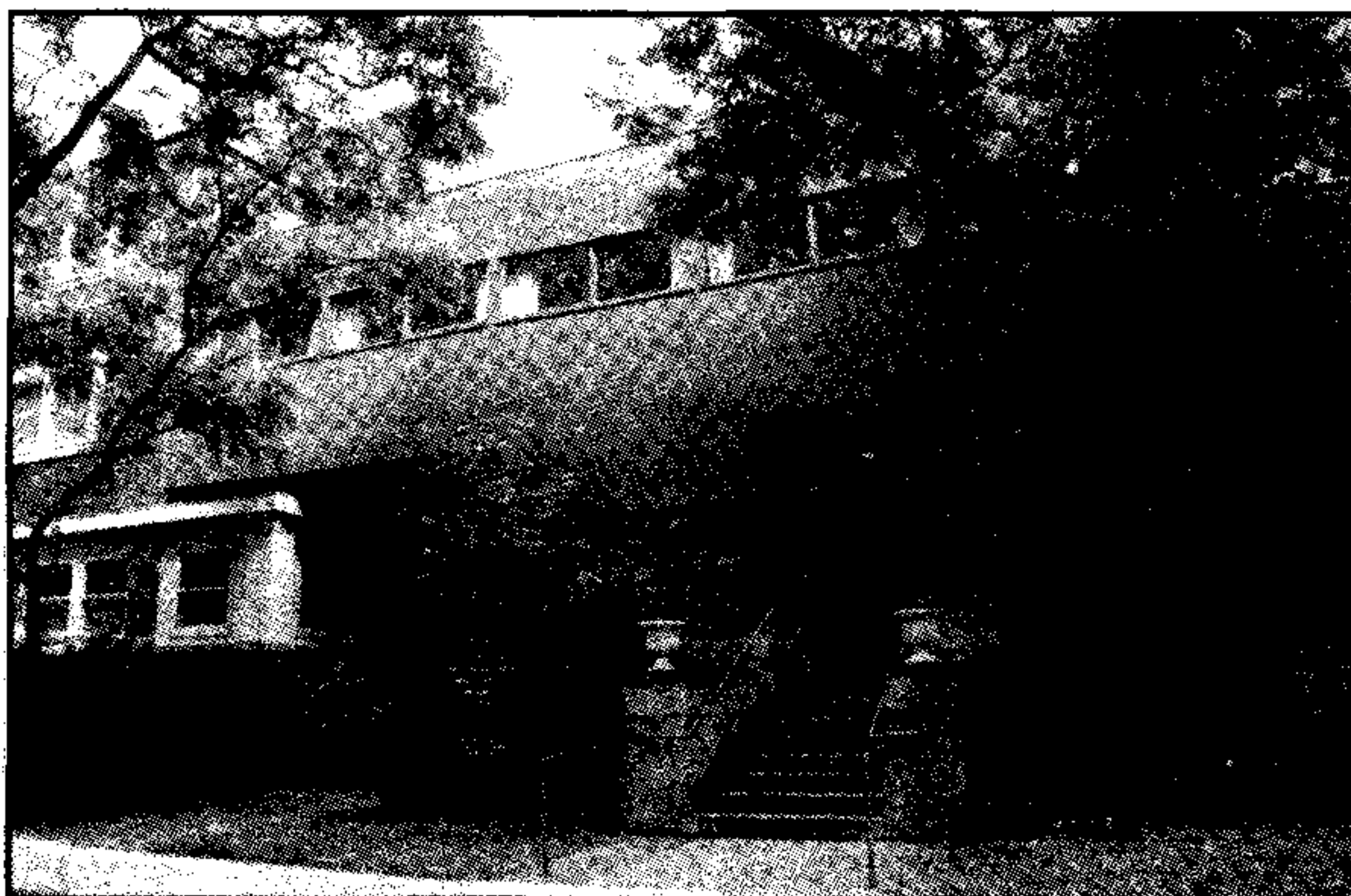
Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj is General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Revered Maharaj has been visiting different places on invitation to deliver lectures and promote the cause of Vedanta. He recently visited some of the Ramakrishna Order's centres in Europe and America. Upon repeated requests, he penned down his feelings and experiences of the tour. We hope our readers will greatly benefit from these beautiful memoirs. This is the fourth in the series.

CHICAGO

Chicago! The very name evokes a lot of feelings in the hearts of every Hindu, as here it was that Swami Vivekananda conquered the West with his eloquence at the Parliament of Religions held in September 1893. So I landed in Chicago with great expectations. But it proved somewhat disappointing. Our centre, the Vivekananda Vedanta Society, has three buildings in Hyde Park Boulevard, a prestigious locality. Started in 1930, the centre has passed through many vicissitudes. Apart from Swami Chidananda, the head or minister-in-charge, only three other swamis—all Americans—reside here. Out of them two are past 80! The centre is housed in two big buildings adjacent to each other. The third building is the 'Holy Mother House', which is separated from the main centre by another building owned by others. This Mother's House is occupied by women devotees occasionally.

On the 4th I went to downtown Chicago, and saw the place where Mr Hale's house once stood. Now there is a high-rise building. Similarly, a big hotel has come up where Mrs Lyon's house was situated. Both these houses had been sanctified by Swami Vivekananda's stay many times. There is a church now where he sat down exhausted and Mrs Hale came out of her house and met him. Of course, the Lincoln Park is

there—where Swamiji would go for morning walks. Once he was sitting like a statue in the park and a lady left her child on his lap! He sat there till she came again and took back her baby. This happened on many succeeding days! The Art Palace where Swami Vivekananda gave his historical speech is no doubt there, but the interior is much too changed. The Hall of Columbus where Swamiji addressed the huge audience has been reduced to a small auditorium, seating 500 persons. The rest of the building is a huge art museum now. There are many places which Swami Vivekananda visited during his stay in Chicago. A local resident, Mr Asim Chaudhury, has done an arduous research on this subject, and his book on this subject has been published by the Advaita Ashrama recently.



Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago

Chicago is the third largest city in the USA. It is situated on Lake Michigan, which is like an inland sea of fresh water. Being an older city, the remnants of the old-world architecture are still there in Chicago. Our centre is quite near the lake. Chicago is also called a 'windy' city as a strong cold wind keeps blowing very often. The weather is unpredictable. One day I had to keep the fan on the whole night. The next day, after some rain, it became so cold that I had to wear a heavy sweater! The summer is quite hot, the temperature reaching up to 90°F, while in winter it may come down to -20°F! Again, while 8 May night was hot, the next day it was quite cold! This is Chicago.

The Chicago University is one of the older universities. It can boast of many Nobel laureates from among its alumni and faculty. On 5th morning, we left for Ganges Retreat, some 2½ hours away. This village got the name 'Ganges' because the Maharaja of Baroda, who happened to visit Michigan State, stuck up a friendship with the then Governor of the State, and the Governor requested the Maharaja to name a few places. Ganges was one of the four or five places he named. This retreat is more than 100 acres big. Everything is big in the Vivekananda Monastery here. A chapel where 100 people can sit on chairs, an auditorium to seat 500, dining halls—one big and one small, buildings for monastics and guests, six buildings for women guests on the other side of the road—all these make it a big establishment. A lot of teak wood brought from India has lavishly gone into the making of these buildings. Maintenance is now a big problem due to want of manpower. Swami Chidananda took me to 'Holland'—a beautiful little town of Dutch settlers. Tulip, the national flower of Holland, was in bloom everywhere, that being springtime. They were in fantastic colours. Next morning we went to see the Lake Michigan. Waves were dashing against the charming beach. The waters change colours often or so it appeared. This area, with plenty of tall trees, is captivating. Some devotees had gathered by lunch-time.

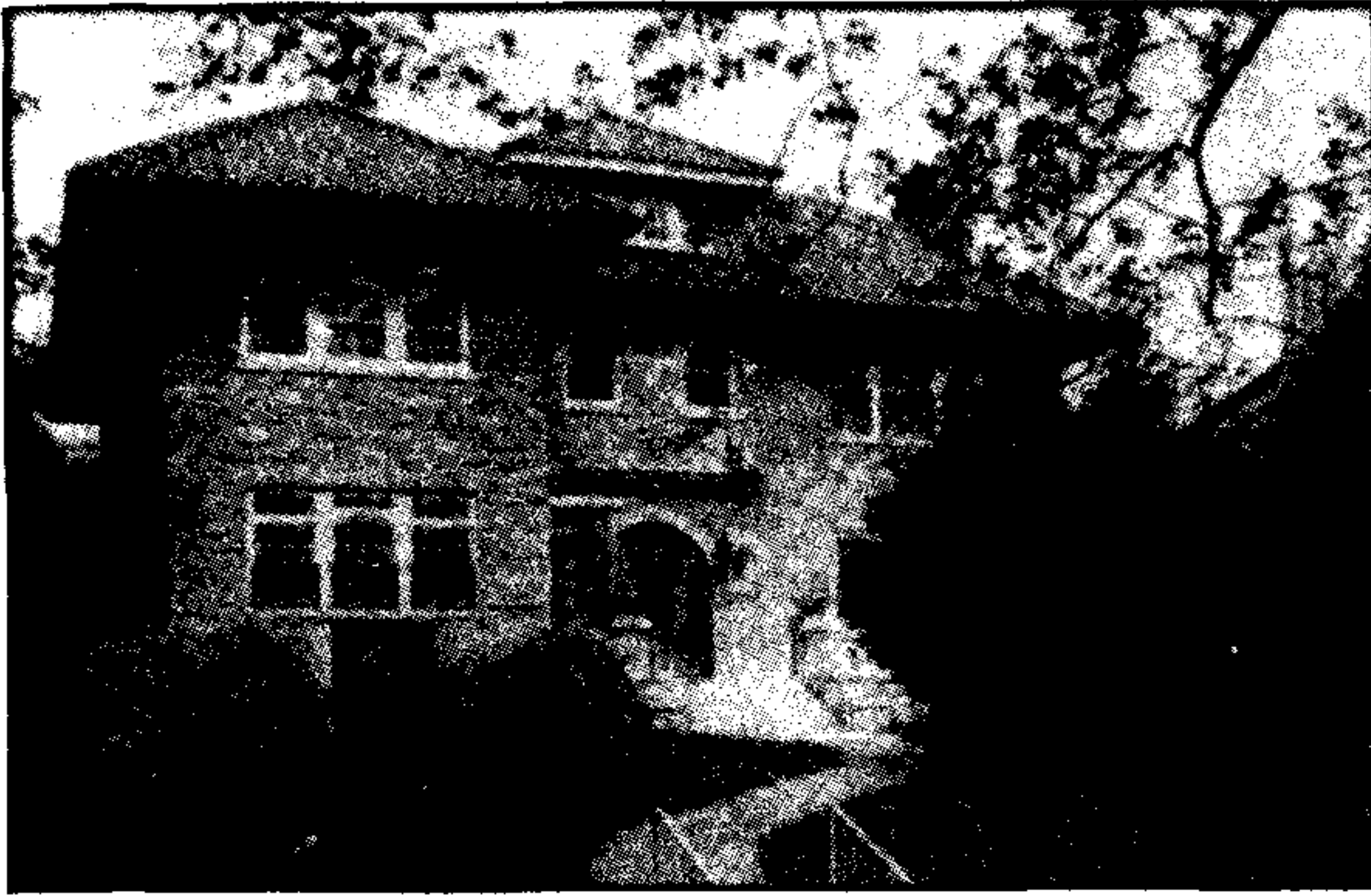
We returned to Chicago in the afternoon. On Sunday morning at 11 am I spoke to an audience of 200 or more on 'Sri Ramakrishna, the Spiritual Ideal for Today'. Only 40 or 50 were Americans, and the rest were Indians. All were served an Indian lunch. Many devotees had brought some food. Next day, I went to see the Hindu Temple at Lermont. It has a big area, beautifully landscaped with lawns etc. Sri Venkateswara is the main deity of the temple; but there are other deities also. Pujaris (priests) from southern India take care of the worship. Swami Vivekananda's bronze statue, which was made in Calcutta for installing elsewhere in Chicago, has at last found a place here on the Hindu Temple grounds. The image of Swami Vivekananda is in the posture of his entering the Parliament of Religions. The images of Sri Rama, Sita and others are not quite up to the mark. With millions of dollars spent, the images of these deities should have been the best.

Next day, I went to see the Science and Industry Museum, not far from our centre. Swami Vivekananda had visited this museum. Of course, during these 100 years plenty of new additions have been made, thanks to the 'great leap forward' of science. It will take more than a whole day to see the museum in detail. It is, indeed, a treasure-house for science students.

ST LOUIS

On the 10 May, I bid goodbye to Chicago and took the flight to St Louis. But, after checking in, we learnt that the flight would be delayed. So I took another flight, but minus the baggage! On reaching St Louis, we informed the airport people that the baggage had to arrive by the delayed flight. They assured me that the baggage would be delivered at our centre next morning by 9 am. And they did that promptly. It is here we in India have much to learn. This is efficiency to the core!

The Vedanta Society of St Louis was founded in 1938 by Swami Satprakashananda. The centre has two buildings, with a garden and a parking lot. Swami Chetanananda is the



Vedanta Society of St Louis

present head. Our centre is situated in a nice locality. The St Louis population is predominantly Catholic and as a result quite conservative. The St Louis Cathedral is an architectural marvel. Paintings on the ceilings and the marvellous mosaic work are fantastic. The cathedral was built in memory of King Louis IX of France some 200 years ago.

On 11th evening I spoke on the 'Ideals of the Ramakrishna Mission' before an audience of 60. Next morning, Swami Chetanananda took me to Kansas City by air. The Vedanta Society of Kansas City is founded and managed by devotees, with the active help and cooperation of our swami in St Louis. They

have a beautiful small building in a nice locality. In the evening about 40 devotees had gathered and I talked with them for an hour and a half. Dinner was served for all at 9 pm.

Next day it was quite cold. At 10.30 am I spoke on 'Vedanta, the Religion for the 21st century'. We returned to St Louis in the afternoon. Before going to the Ashrama, we went to see the confluence of Mississippi and Missouri rivers, some 45 minutes' distance from St Louis. It is a nice sight. Mississippi river is the third longest in the world. Being a

Sunday, at 10.30 am. I spoke on 'What is Vedanta' for an hour. There was an audience of 85 people, mostly Americans.

In the afternoon Swami Chetanananda took me to a Hindu temple. It is situated on a 4-acre land and well organized. The main deity is Sri Venkateswara. The priest is from south India. However, there is a Jain enclosure, which is full of rich carvings in white marble from Rajasthan—a bit of Dilwara carried to America! On the whole, the temple seems well-endowed with funds.

(to be continued)

The Nature of the Problem

(continued from p. 265)

The political fathers enter into peace-contracts. Agreements for the cessation of violence are made. But the world does not change. This is because a contract does not spring from the heart. The face of the world does not change if the heart is not transformed.

The philosophy of India offers a teaching which holds out the promise of unifying the fragmented world of today. The Upanishads preach the oneness of the world, the affinity of all human beings. 'That thou art' is the most

fascinating dictum for the Advaitins which explains the essential divinity of all human beings. This is the idea which inspired Swami Vivekananda in his philosophy of practical Vedanta.

Philosophy cannot be made popular that way. But it can be shown to solve our ethical problems; it can build up a new world which is not distressed by political, ideological and religious fragmentation. □

Ralph Waldo Emerson's Appreciation of India in His Own Words

DR GORDON R. STAVIG

We are almost on the verge of celebrating the 200th birth anniversary of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson was born on 25 May 1803. He was well known as an essayist, orator, and a poet. He was behind the formation of the famous philosophical group called Transcendentalism. Mr Gordon Stavig, PhD, stays in Hollywood, USA, and has specialized in the comparative study of Indian and western religion. He has painstakingly culled Emerson's ideas from different sources. We publishing parts of this compilation here.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) the famous American essayist, transcendental philosopher and poet, had a great admiration for Indian knowledge, that is exemplified in his numerous praises of Indian literature and culture. He learned of Indian thought primarily from reading English language versions of the *Bhagavadgita*, *Laws of Manu*, *Vishnu Purana*, *Bhagavata* and a few other translations. The following quotations are taken from Emerson's *Essays and Journals*.¹ The passages cited are subdivided into the topics of: Praise of India; Appreciation of Indian Literature; God and the Soul; Oneness and the Unity of Existence; and Religious Knowledge.

1. *Essays* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co, 1904), 12 volumes; *Journals*, ed. Edward Emerson and Waldo Forbes (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1909), 10 volumes. The volumes of the *Journals* cited in the text were written in the following years: IV (1836-38), V (1838-41), VI (1841-44), VII (1845-48), IX (1856-63) and X (1864-76). For Emerson's longer references to Indian scriptures not covered in this article, see: the 'Upanishadic story of Nachiketas' (*Essays*, VIII: 349-52); 'Narayana' (*Journals*, I: 157); 'Vishnu Purana' (*Journals*, VII: 108), and the 'Rig Veda Sanhita' which praises Agni, Indra, the Maruts, the Aswin twins, Varuna and Vishnu (*Journals*, VIII: 547-9).

Praise of India

To this partiality the history of nations corresponded. The country of unity, of immovable institutions, the seat of philosophy delighting in abstractions, of men faithful in doctrine and in practice to the idea of a deaf, unimplorable immense fate, is Asia; and it realizes this faith in the social institution of caste. ... If the East loved infinity, the West delighted in boundaries. (*Essays*, IV: 52)

The favour of the climate, making subsistence easy and encouraging an outdoor life, allows the Eastern nations a highly intellectual organization—leaving out of view, at present, the genius of the Hindoos (more Oriental in every sense), whom no people have surpassed in the grandeur of their ethical statement. (*Essays*, VIII: 239)

In the temperate climates there is a temperate speech, in torrid climates an ardent one. Whilst in Western nations the superlative in conversation is tedious and weak, and in character is a capital defect, Nature delights in showing us that in the East it is animated, it is pertinent, pleasing, poetic. Whilst she appoints us to keep within the sharp boundaries of form as the condition of our strength, she creates in the East, the uncontrollable yearning to escape from limitation into the vast and boundless;.... (*Essays*, X: 176-7)

In India, king, courtier, god, are represented as making the most romantic sacrifices

—kingdom, goods, life itself — for knowledge and spiritual power. (*Journals*, VII: 121-2)

We sigh for the thousand heads and thousand bodies of the Indian gods, that we might celebrate its immense beauty in many ways and places, and absorb all its good.

Trace these colossal conceptions of Buddhism and Vedantism home, and they are always the necessary or structural action of the human mind. Buddhism, read literally, the tenet of Fate, worship of Morals, or the tenet of Freedom, are the unalterable originals in all the wide variety of geography, language and intelligence of the human tribes. (*Journals*, VII: 122)

The Indian teachings, through its cloud of legends, has yet a simple and grand religion, like a queenly countenance seen through a rich veil. It teaches to speak the truth, love others as yourself, and to despise trifles. The East is grand—and makes Europe appear the land of trifles. Identity, identity! Friend and foe are one stuff.... Cheerful and noble is the genius of this cosmogony. (*Journals*, VII: 129-30)

Appreciation of Indian Literature

By the law of contraries, I look for an irresistible taste for orientalism in Britain. For a self-conceited modish life, made up of trifles, clinging to a corporeal civilization, hating ideas, there is no remedy like the Oriental largeness. That astonishes and disconcerts English decorum. For once, there is thunder it never heard, light it never saw, and power which trifles with time and space. I am not surprised to find an Englishman like Warren Hastings, who had been struck with the grand style of thinking in the Indian writings, depreciating the prejudices of his countrymen while offering them a translation of the *Bhagavat [Gita]*. (*Essays*, V: 258-9)

The new study of the Sanskrit has shown us the origin of the old names of God—Dyaus, Deus, Zeus, Zeu pater, Jupiter—names of the sun, still recognizable through the modifications of our vernacular words. (*Essays*, VII: 166-7)

It is only within this century that England

and America discovered that their nurserytales were old German and Scandinavian stories; and now it appears that they came from India, and are the property of all the nations descended from the Aryan race. (*Essays*, VIII: 187)

But if these works still survive and multiply, what shall we say of names more distant, or hidden through their very superiority to their coevals,—names of men who have left remains that certify a height of genius in their several different directions not since surpassed, and which men in proportion to their wisdom still cherish,—as Zoroaster, Confucius, and the grand scriptures, only recently known to Western nations, of the Indian *Vedas*, the *Institutes of Menu* [sic], the *Puranas*, the poems of the *Mahabharat* and the *Ramayana*? (*Essays*, VIII: 214)

The earliest hymns of the world were hymns to these natural forces. The *Vedas* of India, which have a date older than Homer, are hymns to the winds, to the clouds, and to fire. They all have certain properties which adhere to them, such as conversation, persisting to be themselves, impossibility of being warped.... There is no loss, only transference. When the heat is less here it is not lost, but more heat is there. When the rain exceeds on the coast, there is drought on the prairie. (*Essays*, X: 243)

The subtle Hindoo, who carried religion to ecstasy and philosophy to idealism, produced the wonderful epics of which, in the present century, the translations have added new regions to thought. (*Essays*, X: 243)

In India, it is colossal, and though occasionally confounding us from our want of all key to the apologue, often beautiful. The picture which the *Mahabharat* gives of the wars of the Suras and Asuras, of the churning of the Ocean with the Meron [sic] mountain to obtain the drops of Amreeta, or liquor of immortality, is in the gigantic taste, but is pleasing, and the terrible earnestness of the belief in Fate lends an energy to the picture of all conflicts, such as those of the enemies of Hari. What can be

more...daring than the picture the Brahmins give of the beatitude of contemplative absorption when they declare, that 'Heavenly fruition is an impediment to felicity'? (*Essays*, X: 546-7, footnote)

The Oriental genius has no dramatic or epic turn, but ethical, contemplative, delights in Zoroastrian oracles, in *Vedas*, and *Menu* and Confucius. These all embracing apothegms are like these profound moments of the heavenly life. (*Journals*, V: 570)

As for 'shunning evils as sins,' I prefer the ethics of the *Vishnu* [*Purana*]. (*Journals*, VII: 124)

I owed—my friend and I owed—a magnificent day to the *Bhagavat Geeta*. It was the first of books; it was as if an empire spake to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us. Let us not now go back and apply a minute criticism to it, but cherish the venerable oracle. (*Journals*, VII: 511)

A grander legend than Western literature contains, is the story of Nachiketas. (*Journals*, IX: 58)

We read the Orientals, but remain Occidental. The fewest men receive anything from their studies. (*Journals*, IX: 116)

Well, when India was explored, and the wonderful riches of Indian theologic literature found, that dispelled once for all the dream about Christianity being the sole revelation,—for, here in India, there in China, were the same principles, the same grandeurs, the like depths, moral and intellectual.

Well; we still maintained that we were the true men,—we were believers,—the rest were heathen. (*Journals*, IX: 197)

The language and the legends of Arabia and India and Persia are of the same complexion as the Christian. *Vishnu Purana* bears witness.... We say there exists a Universal Mind which imparts this perception of duty, opens the interior world to the humble obeyer.... It has been imparted in all ages. Religion is the

homage to this presence. (*Journals*, X: 100)

God and the Soul

If the red slayer thinks he slays,
Or if the slain thinks he is slain.
They know not well the subtle ways I keep,
and pass and turn again.
Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanquished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.
They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I am the hymn the Brahmin sings.
The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn they back on heaven.

—(*Essays*, IX: 195)

Vedanta. The Internal Check. 'He who eternally restrains this and the other world, and all beings therein; who, standing in the earth, is other than the earth; whom the earth knows not, whose body the earth is, who interiorly restrains the earth, the same is thy soul, and the Internal Check immortal.' 'The internal check is the Supreme being.' —Colbrooke's *Essays*, p. 341. (*Journals*, VII: 110)

The doctrine of the Triform came from India. (*Journals*, VII: 127)

'From whom the sun rises, and in whom it sets again, him all the gods entered; from him none is separated; this is that.' 'What is here, the same is there, and what is there, the same is here. He proceeds from death to death who beholds here difference.' 'He (Brahma, or the Soul) does not move; is swifter than the mind: not the gods (the senses) did obtain him, he was gone before. Standing, he outstrips all the other gods, how fast soever they run.' 'He moves, he does not move. He is far, and also near.' (*Journals*, IX: 56)

'Know that which does not see by the eye; and by which they see the eyes, as Brahma, and not what is worshipped as this.' 'Know that which does not think by the mind, and by which they say the mind is thought, as

Brahma, and not what is worshipped as this.' The soul declared by an inferior man is not easy to be known, but when it is declared by a teacher who beholds no difference, there is no doubt concerning it, the soul being more subtle than what is subtle, is not to be obtained by arguing. (*Journals*, IX: 57)

Dream. 'When he sleeps, then becomes this Purusha unmingled light. No chariots are there, no horses, no roads; then he creates chariots, horses, roads; no pleasures are there, no tanks, no lakes, or rivers; then he creates joys, tanks, lakes, rivers; for he is the agent.' *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, p. 224. (*Journals*, IX: 302-3)

Oneness and the Unity of Existence

In all nations there are minds which incline to dwell in the conception of the fundamental Unity. The raptures of prayer and ecstasy of devotion lose all being in one Being. This tendency finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian Scriptures, in the *Vedas*, the *Bhagavat Geeta*, and the *Vishnu Purana*. Those writings contain little else than this idea, and they rise to pure and sublime strains in celebrating it.

'But I, father,' says the wise Prahlada, in the *Vishnu Purana*, 'know neither friends nor foes, for I behold Kesava in all beings as in my own soul.' It confers perpetual insight. It sees that a man's friends and his foes are of his own household, of his own person. What would it avail me, if I could destroy my enemies? There would be as many to-morrow. That which I hate and fear is really in myself, and no knife is long enough to reach to its heart. (*Essays*, X: 120)

'A man and his wife' says *Menu*, 'constitute but one person; a perfect man consists of himself, his wife, and his son.' (*Journals*, V: 29)

Some men have the perception of difference predominant, and are conversant with surfaces and trifles, with coats and coaches, and faces, and cities; these are the men of talent.... And other men abide by the percep-

tion of Identity; these are the Orientals, the philosophers, the men of faith and divinity, the men of genius. (*Journals*, VI: 293-4)

Religious Knowledge and Practice

'That is active duty,' say the Hindoos, 'which is not for our bondage; that is knowledge, which is for our liberation: all other duty is good only unto weariness.' (*Essays*, IV: 138)

Everything is superficial and perishes but love and truth only. The largest is always the truest sentiment, and we feel the more generous spirit of the Indian Vishnu,—'I am the same to all mankind. There is not one who is worthy of my love or hatred. They who serve me with adoration,—I am in them, and they in me. If one whose ways are altogether evil serves me alone, he is as respectable as the just man; he is altogether well employed; he soon becometh of a virtuous spirit and obtaineth eternal happiness.' (*Essays*, IV: 139)

The Hindoos write in their sacred books, 'Children only, and not the learned, speak of the speculative and the practical faculties as two. They are but one, for both obtain the selfsame end, and the place which is gained by the followers of the one is gained by the followers of the other. That man seeth, who seeth that the speculative and the practical doctrines are one.' (*Essays*, IV: 267-8)

'A man,' says Vishnu Sarma, 'who having well compared his own strength or weakness with that of others, after all doth not know the difference, is easily overcome by his enemies.' (*Essays*, VI: 235)

The Indian *Vedas* express when they say, 'He that can discriminate is the father of his father.' (*Essays*, VII: 317)

If the man is not ashamed of his poverty, there is no joke. The poorest man who stands on his manhood destroys the jest. The poverty of the saint, of the rapt philosopher, of the naked Indian, is not comic. The lie is in the surrender of the man to his appearance; as if a man should neglect himself and treat his shadow on the wall with marks of infinite respect. (*Essays*, VIII: 169) □

RELIGION AND LIFE

Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

The questions and answers being serialized in these columns are not meant to be scholarly expositions of various issues. People from different walks of life used to meet Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj daily during his tenure as President of the Ramakrishna Order, and discuss with him their problems and doubts; and Revered Maharaj would clear their doubts in a characteristically simple way. These questions and answers were recorded and read out to him before he approved them all for publication.

[Readers, please note: Śaṁkara Jayanti is being celebrated this month.]

Maharaj, today is Śrī Śaṁkara's birth anniversary (pañcamī). What shall we learn from his life?

The attainment of *brahmajñāna*, the knowledge of Brahman!

God Himself is the jagadguru. Why then is Śrī Śaṁkarācārya called jagadguru?

This is because Śrī Śaṁkarācārya was an incarnation of God.

Why is Śaṁkarācārya referred to as a crypto-Buddhist?

Śrī Śaṁkarācārya was a monist and not a *māyāvādin*—a propounder of the theory of illusion. Critics of Śaṁkara refer to him as a *māyāvādin*. And it is these people who call him a crypto-Buddhist or *pracchanna bauddha*. The followers of Śaṁkara do not refer to him thus. Like the Buddhists, Śaṁkara also believed in the *nirguṇa* aspect of Reality. Śaṁkara was the propounder of the reality of Brahman, he was a *brahma-vādin*. Brahman is not air, not space, not gross, not subtle, not long, not short, not shadow, not smell—all these are the ways of explaining Brahman.

We read in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* [3.8.8]: 'Sa hovāca, etad vai tadakṣaram gārgi brāhmaṇā abhivadanti, asthūlam - ananum - ahrasvam - adirgham - alohitam - asneham - acchāyam - atamo - avāyu - anākāśam - asaṅgam -

arasam - agandham - acakṣuṣkam - aśrotram - avāgam - amano - atejaskam - aprāṇam - amukham - amātram - anantaram - abāhyam, na tadaśnāti kiñcana, na tadaśnāti kiñcana.' The meaning is, 'Brahman is neither gross nor minute, neither short nor long, neither red colour nor oiliness, neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor ether, neither savour nor odour. It is unattached, and without eyes, ears, voice or mind. It is non-luminous, without the vital force or mouth. It is without inside or outside. It is not a measure. It does not eat anything.'

This is the explanation of Brahman. But this conforms with the Buddhist nihilism. The Buddhist *nirvāṇa* and Hindu *brahma-svarūpatā* are almost similar. There is no duality anywhere in both. So critics call Śaṁkara a crypto-Buddhist.

Śaṁkara says that duality melts in supreme Reality, while the Buddhist approach is that everything gets eliminated (*laya*). Śaṁkara, however, does not speak of the elimination of everything; he only speaks of the elimination of duality. That is, he speaks only of pure knowledge—the knowledge of non-duality. He says everything gets merged in That through which we have knowledge. The Buddhists on the other hand say that all knowledge is annihilated.

Though Śaṁkara was the propounder of non-duality, why did he retain the ego of knowledge?

He did so in order to teach us. Śaṁkara

says [cf. *Carpaṭa-pañjarikā-stotram*]:

*Kurute gaṅgā-sāgara gamanam
vrata-paripālanam-athavā dānam;
jñāna-vihīne sarvam-anena
muktir-na bhavati janma-śatena.*

'People visit Ganga-Sagar, perform various rituals and good deeds like almsgiving. Such things may give everything. But unless one has knowledge, one can never be liberated.'

Śaṅkara also gives an illustration. Both sand and the sesame seed are Brahman. But you do not get oil by pressing sand—you will have to press the sesame seed. When we are in the relative plane, we have accepted this duality and difference. Please keep this in mind.

Swami Vivekananda has spoken about Śaṅkara's brain. What does he mean?

Swamiji has spoken about Śaṅkara's brain. By 'Śaṅkara's brain' is meant the philosopher's brain. He was the propounder of such a grand and unique philosophy. He was the establisher of the theory of Brahman, the adorer of non-duality.

*Tadekaṁ smarāmas-tadekaṁ bhajāmas-
tadekaṁ jagat-sākṣi-rūpaṁ namāmaḥ;
Sadekaṁ nidhānam nirālambam-iśaṁ
bhavāmbhodhi-potaṁ śaraṇyaṁ vrajāmaḥ.*
—*Brahma-stotram*

Śaṅkara says that by depending on the body, there is only misery. Hold on, therefore, to the Self.

Śaṅkarācārya has not given any teaching for women. Were women low in his estimation?

How much Śaṅkara respected and revered his mother. His mother was a woman!

Maharaj, if I consider myself to be the

eternally pure, immortal, and ever-blissful Self (nitya-śuddha-mukta-ātmā) can I have the knowledge of Brahman?

Oh yes, you can! If you can think of yourself as *nitya-śuddha-mukta-ātmā* you can certainly attain the knowledge of Brahman. Whatever you wish, you can get.

Maharaj, today is the sacred Akṣaya Tṛtiyā day. There are many tṛtiyās; but why is this one akṣaya?

This is because, they say if you perform some meritorious act on this *tṛtiyā* day, that is, the third day of the month of Vaiśākha, the fruit of that act will become everlasting. The scriptures ordain that the fruit of good deeds done on this day are all stored up.

What is svadharma?

A householder's *svadharma* or natural and customary duty is the *gārhasthya dharma*, the duties of the householder ordained by scriptures. For a monk, however, holding firmly to the vow of renunciation is the duty or *svadharma*. That is, in whatever station of life you may be, you should follow the rules of that particular way of life strictly; this is the following of one's dharma.

What is dvaita or dualism?

To philosophically accept Īśvara and the universe as real is dualism.

Are Viśiṣṭādvaitins devotees?

Of course! They are most certainly devotees. And they are also *jñāni-bhaktas*. That is, since they have a philosophy (*vāda*), they think and discuss; so they are also *jñānis*.

—compiled by Smt Manju Nandi Mazumdar

Without dispassion toward the world, faith and love do not grow. You must have dispassion. To lose the ego in God is dispassion.

—Swami Brahmananda

What a Mohammedan Informed Nivedita...

We reprint excerpts from an article published in The Brahmavadin (February 1903).

A pleasant incident occurred at one of Sister Nivedita's lectures on January 5th [1903] in the town of Salem [now in Tamil Nadu]. A Mohammedan gentleman who had been present throughout her series handed her a letter and a paper—the latter intended to be read to the audience. A few extracts are made here from the paper.

'While listening to your lectures on the two previous occasions ... I found your manner of interpretation to be the same as that of a pure Mohammedan Sufi. I know that the philosophy of Hinduism is more or less the same as that of Mohammedanism, yet wanted to satisfy myself as to whether you had acquired this teaching from a Mohammedan or a Hindu scholar. As I know that these are the only two possible sources.

'I heard from you that you learnt it from a great Hindu Sufi [alluding to Swami Vivekananda], to whom all reverence is due. He was right in defending Mohammedanism (on the occasion you referred to) because he knew that though these are external differences between the two races in worldly matters, yet both of them are one, and will have to pass through the same gate finally, and he knew that nowhere is it said that women have no souls. That much credit is due to your worthy master is clear from the following. Our Sufis compare the heart with a burning lamp. ... Once there was a great discussion between two Sufis, because one compared the heart with the sun, and the other with a burning lamp. But it was found that the sun has no power to make other suns, whereas the light of one lamp can light one hundred thousand others, so the latter example was confirmed.

'Sufis generally sit [for meditation] during the night, after one o'clock, when there is

complete calmness of the world, to fight with their worldly desire. Because it has been declared by Mohammed, the greatest Sufi of Mohammedanism (may peace be on him!) that if at such a time such an exercise be done, it will have speedy and splendid success.

'Once, while a Sufi was teaching his disciple about worldly love in his secluded chamber, an ox with long, broad horns passed along the road, and the master said to the student, "I have taught you enough about love. Look! There is an ox passing along the road. Retire and love that ox. Come and tell me again when you have succeeded." The youth left the Sufi, and remained with the ox constantly thereafter. The townsfolk talked of a youth who had gone mad, being always with an ox. His relations and friends strove earnestly to bring him round, but it was to no purpose. If anybody carried bread to him, he would take it; otherwise he would starve. Whenever he ate or drank his eyes were on the ox, and while he slept, his hand rested on it.

'After two years, he left the ox of his own accord, and came and stood before the threshold of the little chamber of his master. The Sufi, seeing him, said: "Come in, my friend!" "Sir," replied the youth earnestly, "I cannot come in. For my horns cannot get in at the doorway." "Ah!" said his teacher. "You are greater than myself. The praise is not to me, but to my master, whose words and manner of love I taught you." Then he taught him of spiritual love, saying, "*khak-sho*" ie, "first destroy your self, then find out the secret." Literally, the reference is to the man in the royal mint who washes the ashes in order to recover any particles of bullion that may have fallen.

'This is one of a thousand stories of love—not fable but fact.' □

The Theory of Relativity and Vedantic Concepts

DR ANADI JIVAN DAS

Dr Anadi Jivan Das is presently full professor of mathematics, Simon Fraser University, Canada, as well as visiting professor, Universities of Washington and British Columbia. He is also the author of The Special Theory of Relativity: A Mathematical Exposition (Springer-Verlag, New York, 1993). These apart, he is also the founding president of the Vedanta Society of British Columbia, BC, Canada. Here's a brilliant paper from him.

I clearly see the harmony between the knowledge bounded by time and space and the knowledge beyond both, where the senses and mind cannot reach. And I clearly see the harmony between Vedantic doctrines and those of recent science; the perfect harmony between Vedantic cosmology and eschatology with those pertaining to recent science.

—Swami Vivekananda

Scientific theories deal with possible explanations of events in the external world or physical universe. The psychic and spiritual truths happen to be far from either the reach or the scope of present-day science. On the other hand, Vedanta or Samkhya philosophies enquire into the meaning and essence of *both* the psychophysical and spiritual realms. In overlapping areas of the investigations of science and Vedanta some interesting analogies emerge. The main motivation behind this article is to bring out these similarities. Firstly, rudiments of the theory of relativity will be explained in non-technical terms. Afterwards, these concepts will be related to the Vedantic and Samkhyan views of the universe.

The theory of relativity subdivides into two—namely, the *special* theory of relativity (1905) and the *general* theory of relativity (1916), both discovered by Albert Einstein. To understand the special theory, we have to go back to the propagation of light waves. The visual picture of a wave, or ripple propagation, can be recollected from the familiar scenes of water waves on rivers or lakes. Water waves require the water as a medium to travel

on, and waves travel with some definite speed. This speed is defined to be:

Suppose you watch oncoming travelling waves from the bank of a river (Figure 1). If you run towards these waves, the apparent

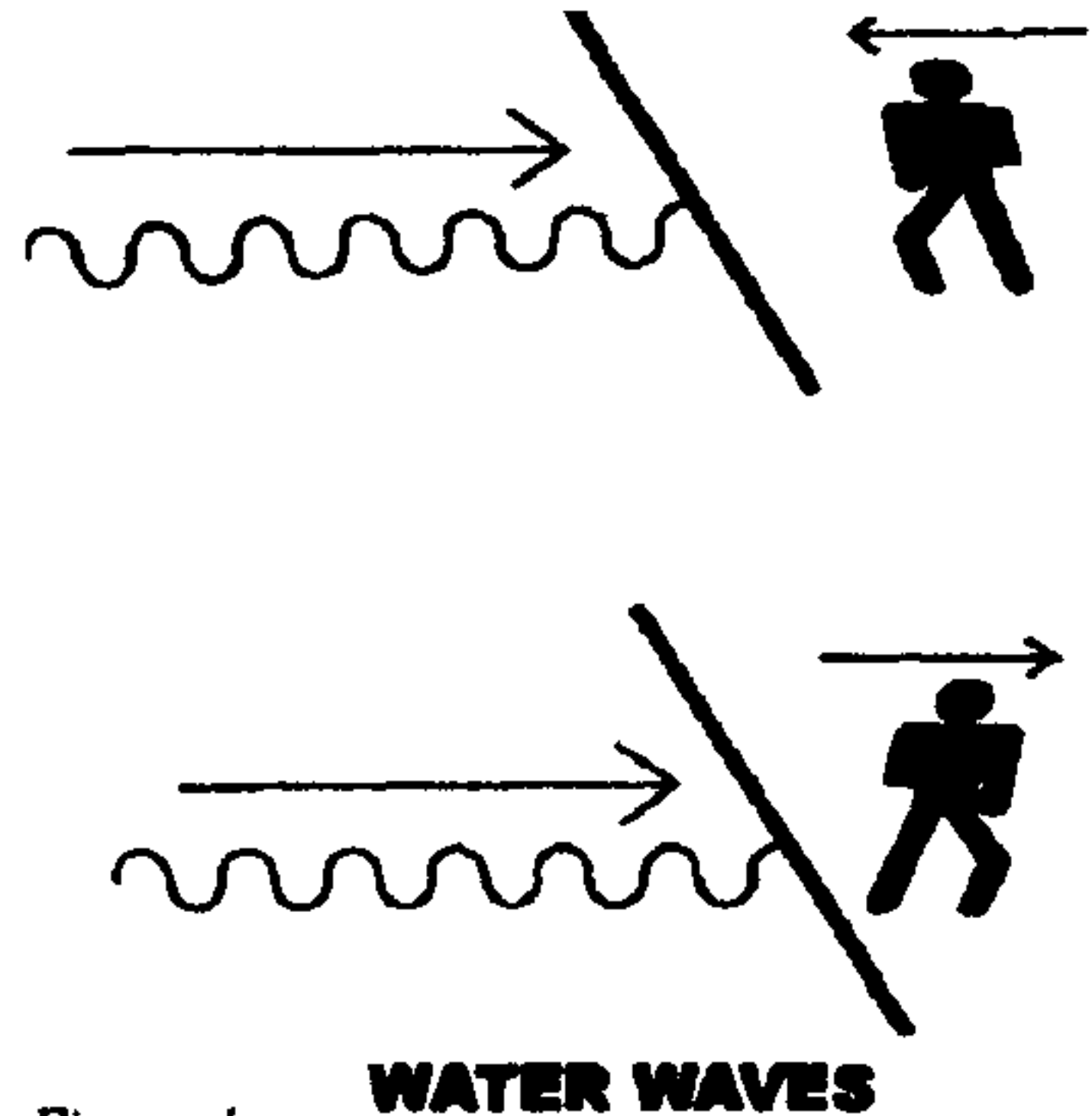


Figure 1

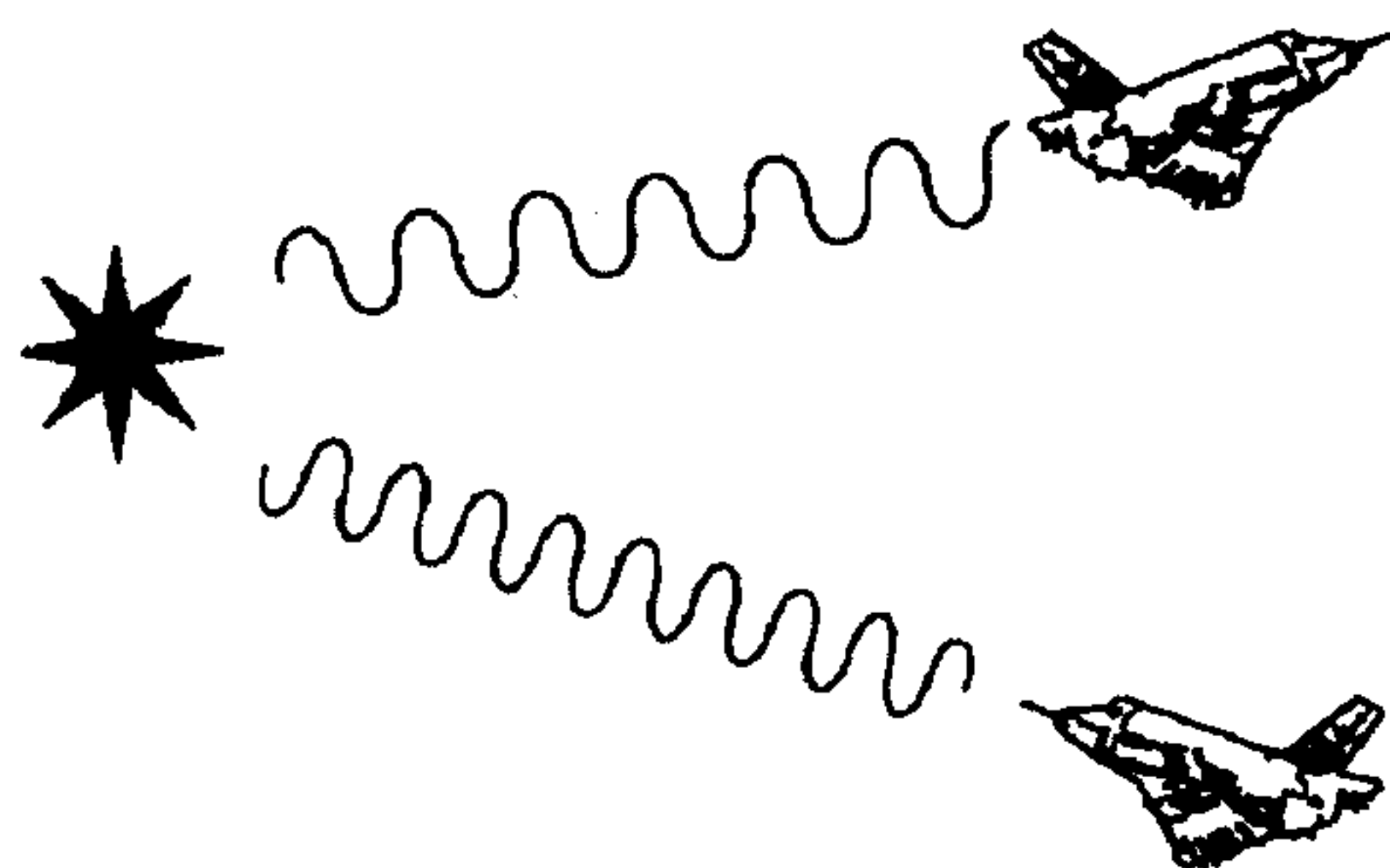
WATER WAVES

speed with which the waves are approaching will increase. Similarly, if you run away from the shoreline, the apparent speed of wave propagation will decrease.

The 19th century scientists (mainly Maxwell) discovered that light consists of electromagnetic waves. Since waves need a medium to propagate on, scientists postulated a medium called *ether* for the propagation of light or electromagnetic waves. Since light emitted by stars travels through outer space, and light also travels through transparent media (like glass etc), the scientists naturally concluded that the medium ether must be all-pervading. Therefore, as planets go around the sun, they

must also travel through ether. Two scientists, Michelson and Moreley, made sophisticated experiments in the last century to measure the speed of the earth inside ether. They discovered the astounding experimental result that the earth is always at rest in ether! These scientists concluded, with a stretch of imagination, that if their experiments were performed on Mars or on other planets, the outcome would have been exactly the same. Therefore, it can be finally concluded that all material bodies are at rest relative to this medium, ether, although these bodies may have relative motions with respect to each other in space!

This is an extremely strange situation. What does this conclusion imply for light or electromagnetic wave propagation? Let us consider a star emitting light which approaches the earth. Let one astronaut fly his rocket towards that star and another astronaut fly his rocket away from the star (Figure 2).



ASTRONAUTS AND THE LIGHT FROM A STAR

Figure 2

Since the motions of such rockets in ether are of zero speed, in both cases the light approaches the rockets with exactly the *same speed*. Therefore, the speed of light propagation is independent of the state of (linear) motions of the observer (or the source)! This is a puzzling conclusion about the concept of speed (which is distance divided by time). The only way out of this puzzle is to conclude that measurements of distance (or space) and measurements of time change together for a moving observer so that the distance divided

by time (for light waves) remains intact. It turns out that length and distance contract for a moving rod and time slows down for a moving clock concurrently to account for the consistency of the speed of light. In the extreme case, when the observer tends to move with the speed of light, space in that direction for him almost contracts to zero and time almost stops. So, philosophically speaking, space has become relative and time also has become relative to the state of motion. These are some basic revisions to our ideas of time-space which are dictated by special relativity. Sir Arthur Eddington has commented that the theory of relativity should have been called the theory of the absolute, since the theory probes into (external) space and time to find what is really absolute about it. Let me now point out formally Einstein's postulates in special relativity.

- (i) Natural laws which relate cause to effect (causality) are absolute (or independent of the state of linear motion of the observer).
- (ii) There exists a maximum speed of the propagation of physical action and it is the speed of light.

Since the existence of the *maximum* speed of propagation is a natural law and thus absolute, it is independent of the state of motion. Thus the negative result of the Michelson-Moreley experiment is understood.

In relativity theory it is customary to visualize physical events or happenings in space-time, rather than in space. To give you two examples, consider firstly a circular coin

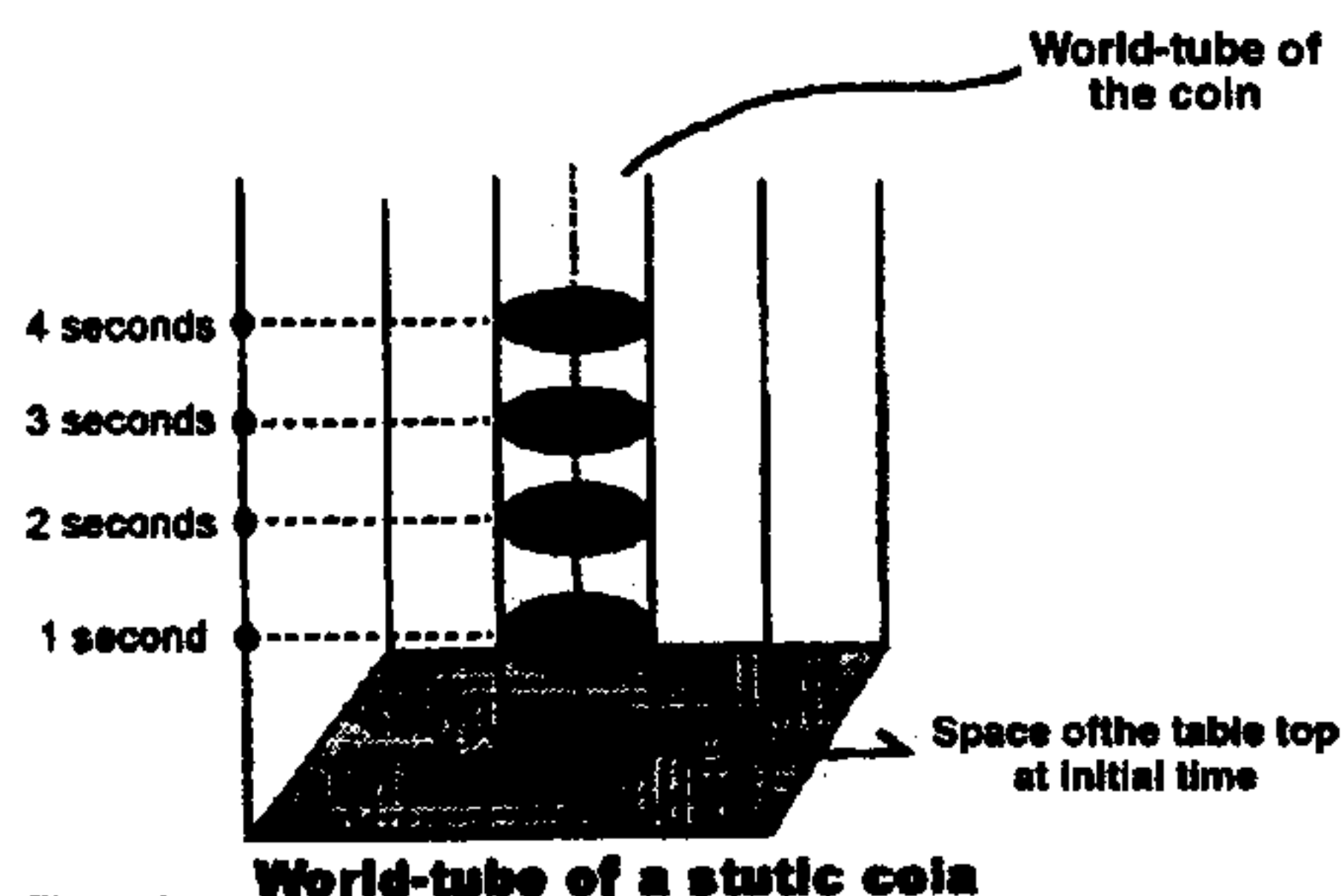


Figure 3a

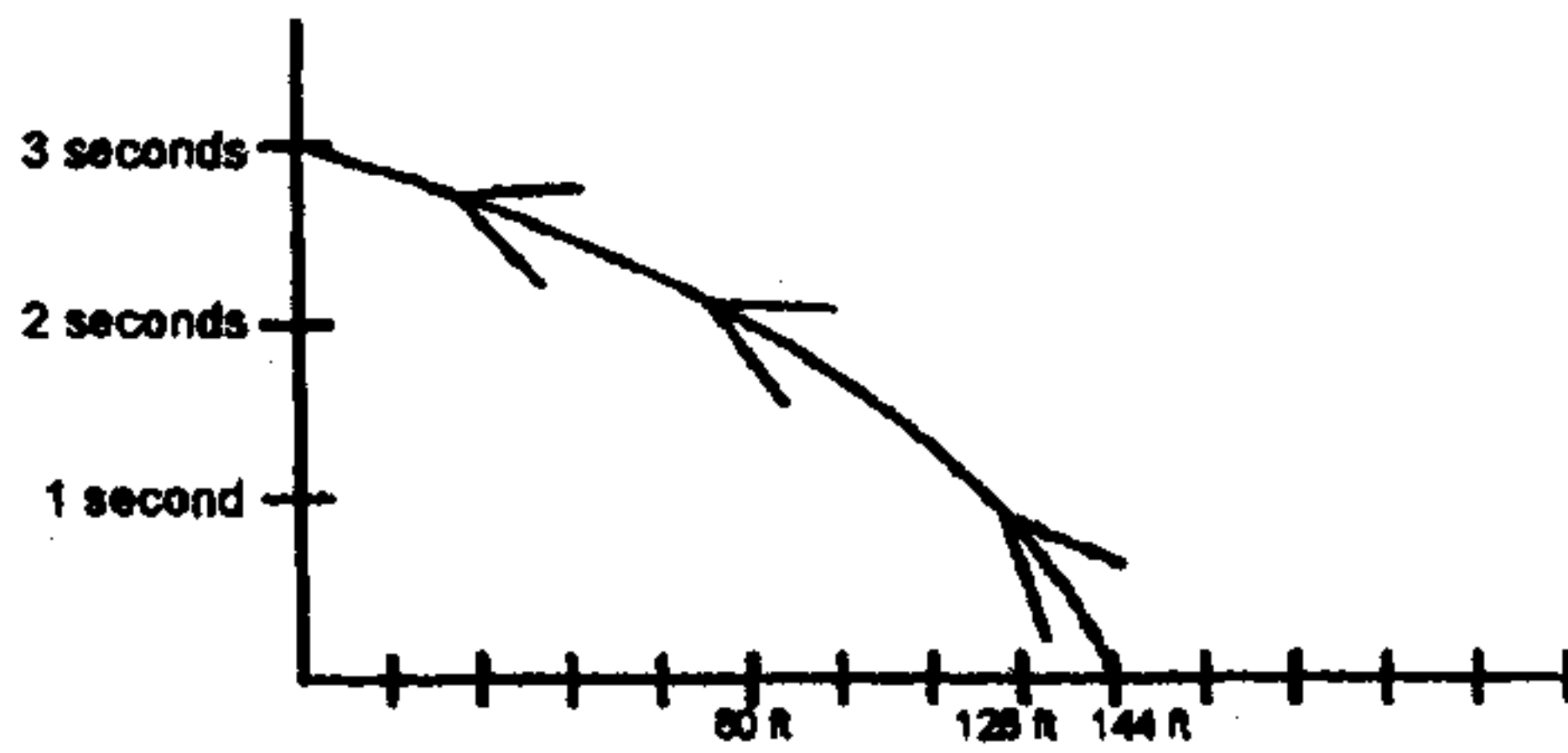


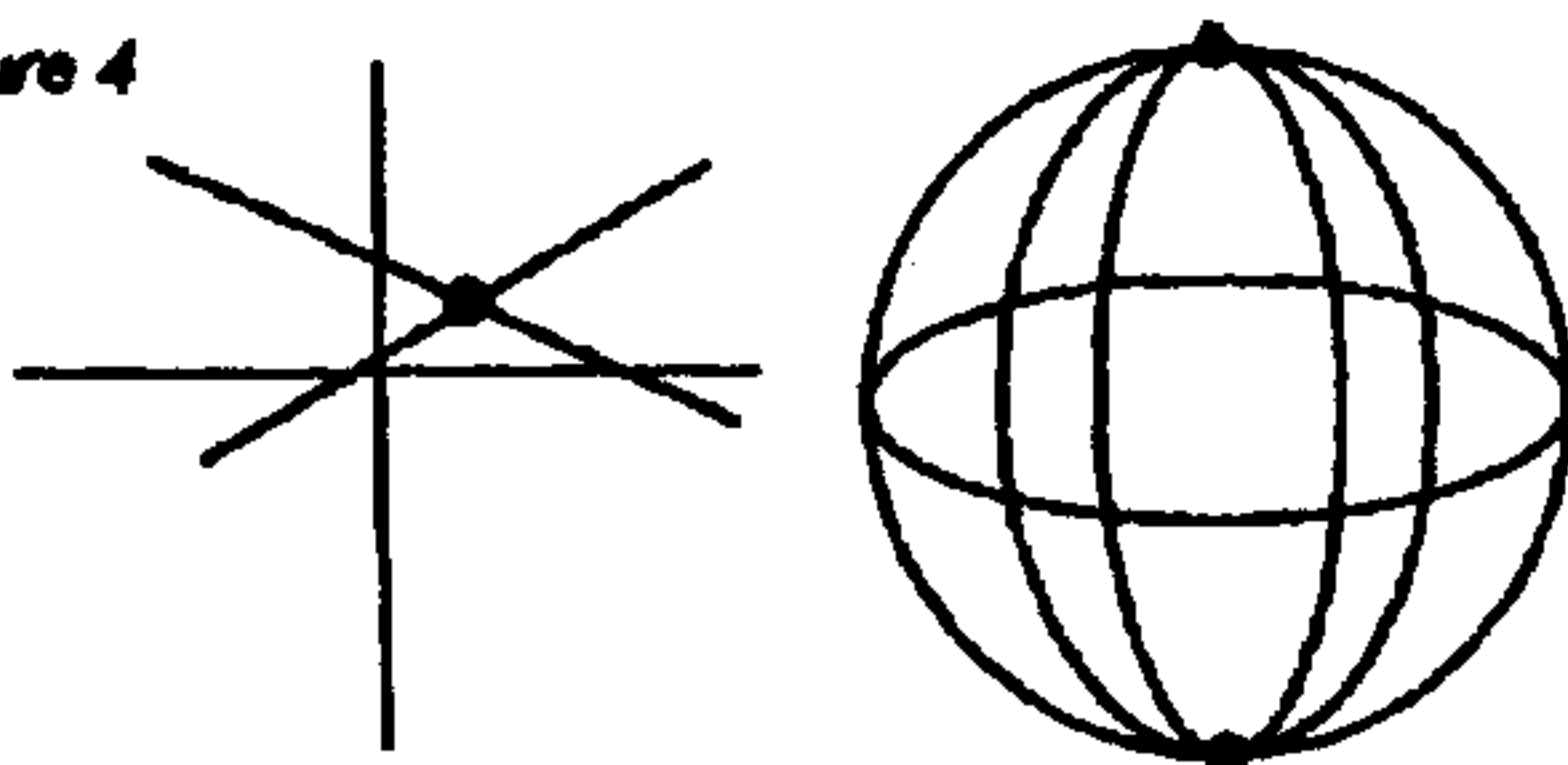
Figure 3b

World-curve of a falling apple

resting on a table. The history of this circular coin (at different times) looks like a cylinder in space-time (Figure 3a). This cylinder is called the *world-tube* of the coin. For the second example consider an apple dropped from a height (say 144 ft), which will fall towards the earth in an accelerated motion due to the force of gravity. For the sake of simplicity, idealize the apple to a point particle. The history of its accelerated motion (the *world-curve*) is part of a parabola in space-time (Figure 3b).

Now, the general relativity deals with curved (or Riemannian) space-time. The phenomenon of gravitation is involved in the curved geometry of space-time in an organically integrated way. Let me try to explain what the curved space-time is. You have all seen curved surfaces like the surface of a sphere (or a globe). The geometry of a curved surface is *different* from the geometry of a flat surface like the plane of a blackboard (Figure 4). The shortest distance between two points

Figure 4

**Shortest distances on a plane and on a sphere**

on a plane is along a straight line. The shortest distance between two points on a spherical surface is along a great circle (which is curved). [The longitudinal lines on a globe are great circles.] Two straight lines on a plane intersect at the most at *one* point. Two great

circles on a sphere meet at *two* points. [Two longitudinal lines on a globe intersect at the north and south poles.] There are also other interesting differences. Now, let us go back to Figure 3b which describes the world-curve of a falling apple in the gravitational field. A peculiar feature of gravitation is that *any other* massive (idealized point) body will follow *the same world-curve* under gravity (when the frictional resistance offered by air is neglected). Einstein concluded that there is something *special* in such a world-curve and it must be a curve of the *shortest* distance in curved space-time geometry. He postulated that matter (like the earth) deforms the surrounding space-time in a curved condition. World-curves of particles (like an apple) are following along the shortest distance available in this curved space-time. These world-curves have apparent curvatures and thus 'appear' as accelerated under gravitational force. In reality there is no such thing as 'gravitational force' and in its place there is only space-time curvature.

A *black hole* is a special kind of material object which deforms space-time and shows apparent gravitational attraction. An extreme black hole is a still more specialized object. If a scientific expedition enters inside an extreme black hole, then the scientists will not encounter any material body at all! As the vehicle carrying these scientists explores the space-time interior of an extreme black hole, they realize emptiness all over. They conclude that in the (deleted) neighbourhood of a distinct world-line, the curvature of space-time becomes unboundedly large. This empty space-time is appearing as a material source of gravitational attraction. Neither the source, nor the force is real. Only the curved empty space-time is real!

Now I shall try to relate these ideas of relativity theory to the Vedantic concepts. In Vedanta, there is a Sanskrit phrase, *deśa-kāla-nimitta*. The English translation is: 'time-space-causation'. In the theory of relativity, 'space-time-causation' is an important phrase. In the special theory of relativity, space-time is di-

vided into the absolute past, the absolute future, and the absolute present, relative to a prescribed event. [*The absolute present is not what is commonly understood as present. The relativists call that as simultaneous present which is not an absolute concept.*] In Vedanta, time is divided into three parts as well, *tri-kāla*. The absolute truth in Vedanta is unchanged by the three modes of time, *tri-kāla-abādhita*.

Einstein, in his younger days, used to imagine what would happen to a person who chases light! It has already been mentioned that near the speed of light, the spatial dimension shrinks to almost nothing and time almost stops. This phenomenon is the physical counterpart of the spiritual state of a yogi near illumination. It is said that in the state of enlightenment there is neither space (physical or mental) nor time (physical or mental), there is only the sense of *eternal here and now*.

In general relativity, in the case of an extreme black hole, the curved, empty space-time itself appears as the source of gravitational attraction. According to the *big bang* theory of cosmology in general relativity, the physical universe or curved space-time was *created* at an initial event. The spatial part of curved space-time is increasing like the surface of a balloon which is being blown into. There is speculation that eventually it will start

to contract and shrink back to nothing. In the more complicated theory of quantum gravity in general relativity, space-time is not only curved in the large scale, but in the small local scale also there are dynamic fluctuations or vibrations of curvature. All these ideas have analogy within the Samkhya cosmology. According to Samkhya philosophy, *ākāśa*, which is the analogue of space-time, was created first. Then *prāṇa*, analogous to energy or vibration, started to act on different parts of *ākāśa*. The various parts of *ākāśa*, vibrating at different frequencies under *prāṇa*, are appearing as the various material objects. The vibrating space-time, in short, is the *only constituent* of the whole (apparent) universe!

In Vedanta philosophy, there exist still finer subdivisions of *ākāśa*. The *mahākāśa* is the physical universe. Beyond that, there exists the *cittākāśa*, the mental universe; beyond that the *cidākāśa*, the causal universe. Still beyond that is the realm of undivided consciousness, *akhaṇḍa caitanya*. The theory of relativity and other branches of science are grasping the workings of *mahākāśa* only. But *cittākāśa* and *cidākāśa* are beyond the scope of present-day scientists. Furthermore, Brahman, which is pure existence-consciousness-bliss, is beyond the reach of speech and mind, *avāṇ-manasa-gocaram*. □

Science and Religion

When the scientific teacher asserts that all things are the manifestation of one force, does it not remind you of the God of whom you hear in the Upanishads: 'As the one fire entering into the universe expresses itself in various forms, even so that One Soul is expressing Itself in every soul and yet is infinitely more besides'? Do you not see whither science is tending? The Hindu nation proceeded from the study of the mind, through metaphysics and logic. The European nations start from external nature, and now they too are coming to the same results. We find that searching through the mind we at last come to that Oneness, that Universal One, the Internal Soul of everything, the Essence and Reality of everything, the Ever-Free, the Ever-Blissful, the Ever-Existing. Through material science we come to the same Oneness.

—Swami Vivekananda

Meditations on Madhu Vidyā

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

We are serializing these meditations, based on Swami Shraddhanandaji Maharaj's talks on Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (Chapter 2).

THE FOURTH MANTRA

अयं वायुः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु, अस्य वायोः
सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु; यश्चायमस्मिन्वायौ तेजोम-
योऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, यश्चायमध्यात्मं प्राणस्तेजोऽ-
मृतमयः पुरुषः, अयमेव स सोऽयमात्मा;
इदममृतं, इदं ब्रह्म, इदं सर्वम् ॥११.५.४॥

This air is honey for all beings, and all beings are honey for this air. The intelligent, immortal being, the soul of this air, and the intelligent, immortal being, the soul in the individual being—each is honey to the other. Brahman is the soul in each; He indeed is the Self in all. He is all.'

Vāyu means air, the atmosphere. Air is everywhere in this world, and that is the source of life, of *prāṇa*, of all living beings. No living being can live without air, or precisely, oxygen. So think of this fact. Think how the atmosphere, which is enveloping our earth, is bringing life to all the living beings. Think of all the animals and birds that use oxygen. The air like a mother is nourishing all these living beings. This is the physical part of meditation. The physical part helps in the expansion of our minds.

Then comes the spiritual part. *Vāyu* or air has a soul and our individual *prāṇa* is related to *vāyu*. Our *prāṇa* or life principle is nourished by the atmosphere. So the air has a soul and our *prāṇa* that is circulating in us all the time also has a soul in the sense that it is based on the Self. We are breathing in and out. This *prāṇa* principle is grounded in the *Ātman*. So think of this unity. First the physical part, then the spiritual part. Just as in the case of earth, water, and fire we have studied earlier, there's

unity in the case of air also. That unifying principle is the Self, and that is Brahman. That, again, is immortality. If we can realize this unity, we attain immortality. Immortality cannot be based in little physical things. Man wants to be immortal and to live and enjoy eternally. But that is not possible in limited spheres. We have to go to the Soul. We have to go to the Infinite within us and the infinite in things. The Infinite is permeating everything. There's a tree which appears to be a tree from outside, but inside it is that Infinite. So we can find that Infinite everywhere. Thus through the physical entities we go to the Infinite. That is the idea.

THE FIFTH MANTRA

अयमादित्यः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु, अस्या-
दित्यस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु; यश्चायमस्मिन्नादित्ये
तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, यश्चायमध्यात्मं चाक्षुष-
स्तेजोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, अयमेव स सोऽयमात्मा;
इदममृतं, इदं ब्रह्म, इदं सर्वम् ॥११.५.५॥

This sun is like honey to all beings and all beings are like honey to this sun. The intelligent, immortal being, the soul of this sun, and the intelligent, immortal being, the soul in the individual being—each is honey to the other. Brahman is the soul in each; He indeed is the Self in all. He is all.

After having studied four meditations on different elements, we come to the sun now. The sun, *āditya*, has a counterpart in the eye. The physical part of this meditation should be that the sun is honey to all beings, and all beings are honey to the sun. And the spiritual part should be that there is a *puruṣa*, the soul of the sun. And there is the soul within us, in

our eyes. The eyes are so important because they enable us to see. So the counterpart of the sun in us is our eye. The spiritual contemplation is that the *puruṣa* which is in the sun is also at the back of our eyes. And we are tied together and that tie is the cosmic soul, Brahman.

THE SIXTH MEDITATION

इमा दिशः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु, आसां दिशां सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु; यश्चायमासु दिक्षु तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, यश्चायमध्यात्मं श्रोत्रः प्रातिश्रुत्कस्तेजोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, अयमेव स सोऽयमात्मा; इदममृतं, इदं ब्रह्म, इदं सर्वम् ॥११.५.६॥

These quarters are honey for all beings, and all beings are honey for these quarters. The intelligent immortal being, the soul of these quarters and the intelligent and immortal being, the soul of the individual being—each is honey to the other. Brahman is the soul in each; He indeed is the Self in all. He is all.

It is said that the ears are the counterparts of the four quarters. It is the ears that bring the sensation of sound to our mind, and the quarters are the carriers of sound. Their mutual relation is honey.

THE SEVENTH MEDITATION

अयं चन्द्रः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु, अस्य चन्द्रस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु; यश्चायमस्मिंश्चन्द्रे तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, यश्चायमध्यात्मं मानसस्तेजोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, अयमेव स सोऽयमात्मा; इदममृतं, इदं ब्रह्म, इदं सर्वम् ॥११.५.७॥

This moon is honey for all beings, and all beings are honey for this moon. The intelligent, immortal being, the soul of this moon, and the intelligent, immortal being, the soul in the individual being—each is honey to the other. Brahman is the soul in each; He indeed is the Self in all. He is all.

According to the scriptures, our mind is related to the moon. So in the depth of the

mind there is the soul. Put in a different language, the pure mind is nothing but the Self. So we have to think that the physical part, the moon, is honey to all beings and all beings are honey to the moon. That is true as the physical part. The spiritual part is, the soul of the moon and the soul of our mind are one.

THE EIGHTH MEDITATION

इयं विद्युत्सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु, अस्यै विद्युतः सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु; यश्चायमस्यां विद्युति तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, यश्चायमध्यात्मं तैजसस्तेजोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, अयमेव स सोऽयमात्मा; इदममृतं, इदं ब्रह्म, इदं सर्वम् ॥११.५.८॥

The lightning is honey for all beings, and all beings are honey for this lightning. The intelligent, immortal being, the soul of this lightning, and the intelligent, immortal being, the soul in the individual being—each is honey to the other. Brahman is the soul in each; He indeed is the Self in all. He is all.

Lightning is honey to all beings and all beings are honey to this lightning. The soul of the lightning and the soul in man are one. Man also has some 'lightening' within him. Sometimes man can behave in such a manner that one is reminded of lightning. A young man and a young woman meet and they say there the lightning strikes: the young man is stupefied and knocked down by a glance of the young lady. Such is the power of worldly attractions. Lightning means the sudden expression of energy. It is sudden, enchanting, as if consciousness itself becomes numb. Moreover, we say there is lightning speed in someone or something. So far as the spiritual part of the meditation is concerned, everything that we manifest is grounded in the soul, in the Ātman, in Brahman. So there is the Self in the lightning as well as in us.

God should be imagined as vast and infinite. To bring this idea of vastness within, one should see the Himalayas or the ocean, or gaze at the sky.

—Swami Brahmananda

Mysore Dasarā—A Living Tradition

SWAMI ATMAJNANANDA

Come October, and there will be a grand festival in Mysore (Karnataka) and Bengal, both centering around the Divine Mother Durgā. What exactly happens in Mysore? Swami Atmajnanandaji has studied the Dasarā festival from various angles and has presented a comprehensive picture of the great event in this article. Atmajnanandaji is in Mysore, assisting in the publication of the Kannada monthly Viveka Prabha.

The Dasarā festival, also called *navarātri* or *daśaharā* or *dusserah* is perhaps the most widely celebrated festival of India. The Navarātri of Karnataka and the Durgā Pūjā of Bengal have been attracting peoples from all over the globe.

The Two traditions

The Durgā Pūjā of Bengal marks the return of Himavān's daughter to her parents' house. Menakā and Himavān's daughter Umā comes on a visit to her mother's house during the autumn season along with her children. Bengali poetry and emotional prose are replete with stories of her hardships in her ascetic husband Śiva's house. So her annual visits are awaited with eagerness. By whom? By the masses, because Umā becomes the daughter of every family, and devotees consider that it's *their* daughter who comes to their house. So a grand festival of worship and devotion, prayer and celebration is arranged, which goes on for five days. Devotees give Umā a warm welcome and worship her from *ṣaṣṭhī* to *daśamī*; and on *daśamī* she is bidden farewell with tears. Umā returns to the Himalayas, '*punarāgamanāya ca*, with the

promise to return again.' Durgā Pūjā is an occasion for grand display of all the rich cultural talents, be it in the making of images or erecting decorative *pandals*. The art of Bengal seeps through every little act of the people during these festivities.

In Karnataka, Navarātri, which is held at the same time as the Durgā Pūjā in Bengal, is



The Mysore Durgā Pūjā—an old painting

connected with the worship of the Divine Mother. Studies have shown that the worship of Mother Durgā actually had their origins in Karnataka, though opinions differ. Navarātri is celebrated for nine days, and earlier, worship was

done at night as the name *nava-rātri* or 'nine nights' implies. Over the years, however, most of the rites have got transferred to the morning. These nine days are the first nine days of the bright fortnight of the month of Āśvina.

Āśvine śuklapakṣe tu

kartavyaṁ navarātrikam;

Pratipadādi krameṇaiva

yāvaddhi navamī bhavet.

—Navarātra Pradipikā

'The Navarātri festival has to be celebrated during the bright fortnight of the month of

Āśvina, in the order of *pratipada*, etc, until the *navamī* ends,' says the *Dhaumya-vacana*.

Daśaharā, meaning 'ten days', becomes *dasarā* in popular parlance. The Navarātri festival or 'nine-day festival' becomes 'ten-day festival' with the addition of the last day, *Vijayā-daśamī* which is its culmination. On all these ten days, Mother Mahiṣāsura-mardini is worshipped with fervour and devotion.

The Tradition of Mother Worship

The worship of the Divine as the female is found in the *Ṛg Veda* itself. Sarasvatī, Ambharaṇī, Rākā, Durgā, Śrī, Medhā, etc, are all names attributed to the various aspects of the same ultimate Principle. Śrī Rāma, before embarking upon his battle against Rāvaṇa, propitiates Mother Durgā. The Purāṇas are replete with descriptions of the Mother and her conquest of the demon Mahiṣa. Images of Mahiṣāsura-mardini, dating back to the 7th century and belonging to the Gupta Period, have been found in Badami (Karnataka) and Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu). The Durgā image is also found in temples in Indonesia etc. Rich accounts of the festival have been recorded in the travelogues of Al Baruni, who visited India

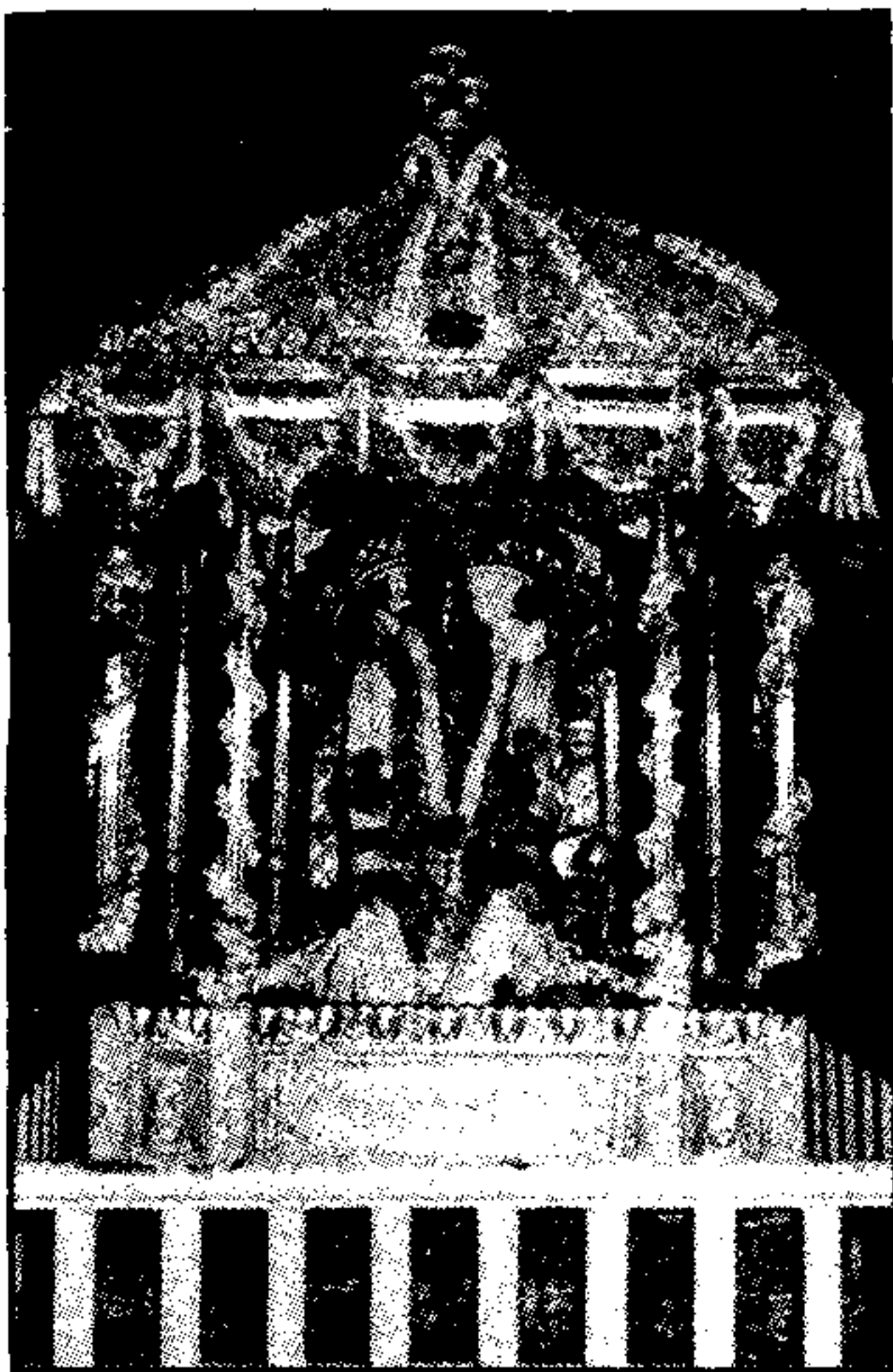
during the 11th century. On the basis of all these records, scholars have opined that the festival of Navarātri was prevalent since more than 2,500 years.

The erstwhile Vijayanagara kings, keen on protecting the Hindu religion and culture from de-

struction by Muslim invaders, laid great emphasis on the restoration of temples and religious festivals from 1336 to 1565 AD. This was a golden period in the religious history of southern India. Literature, art, music, architecture, and the economy itself got a tremendous boost under the Vijayanagara kings. On the religious firmament, there came saints like Purandaradāsa, Kanakadāsa, Sarvajña, and others, who gave a fillip to the bhakti movement. The Navarātri festival started receiving royal patronage from this period onwards, and it acquired the status of a state festival. It was celebrated with great pomp, enthusiasm and fervour, and attracted visitors from many parts of the country and even abroad. Political, administrative, religious and social significance with the appreciation of the laity added to its grandeur.

The Tradition and History of Dasarā

The Mysore kings, Wāḍiyars, were subordinates of the Vijayanagara emperors. They declared independence at the decline of the empire in 1610 AD and tried to retain the latter's goodwill by continuing the traditions started by them. Rājā Wāḍiyar, the founder of the Mysore kingdom, started the Navarātri festivities in order to celebrate his new-found freedom, and issued an order that the days be observed with piety and splendour by one and all. Initially, as the rulers had their stronghold in Srirangapatna, now a satellite town of Mysore city, the festival was celebrated in the courtyard of the Śrī Rāṅganātha temple itself. The extravagance displayed during those days finds copious mention in the literary work of contemporaries. The festival continued undisturbed even during the annexation of Mysore (then state) by Hyder Ali and followed by Tippu Sultan's rule between 1761 and 1799. When Mysore State was restored to Mummaḍi (lit. 'the third') Krishnarāja Wāḍiyar in 1799, the capital was shifted to Mysore city from Srirangapatna, and the Navarātri festivities began to be performed with greater magnificence in the new capital with the introduction of a special durbar ('audience' or



The decorated image of Mother Durgā in the golden howdah of the Mysore royal palace



King Krishnarāja Wāḍiyar IV—
a plaster-of-paris image

'royal assembly') for the Europeans, and direct participation by the common masses. The attendance of the Europeans indicates the friendly ties that the king had with the colonial rulers, apart from the spreading of the popularity of the event in western media.

The festival became a tradition of the royal household and reached its zenith during the rule of Nālvaḍi (lit. 'the fourth') Krishnarāja Wāḍiyar (1902-1940 AD).

The wooden royal palace of Mysore city was famous for its intricate carvings and embellishments of gold and precious stones. Swami Vivekananda during his itinerant days was a royal guest and had several sessions with the king in this palace. Unfortunately, the palace was destroyed in a fire accident in 1897 and a new palace was built in its place by 1912, surpassing the glory of the previous one with the introduction of electrification and European expertise. The royal durbar, the procession of caparisoned elephants with the king seated in a golden howdah (throne with a canopy) followed by his ministers, administrators, the royal staff and the military came to an end with the taking over of all the kingdoms by the Indian Union in 1947. The last crowned king, Sri Jaya Chāmarājendra Wāḍiyar, tried to revive the tradition in his personal capacity after a few years, but the old charm was missing. With the annexation of states from kings by the national government, and

upon the demise of Jaya Chāmarājendra Wāḍiyar in 1974, the tradition again suffered a setback and Mysore almost lost its unique festival until the Government of Karnataka decided to celebrate it as a state fiesta minus the royal entourage. Today, on the occasion of the worldfamous *Jambū Savāri* or Dasarā procession on the *daśami* day, apart from NCC, Scout, and other school and college student displays, tableaux depicting the land's culture and history, folk-art performances, etc, and volunteer groups follow the caparisoned elephants, one of which (Droṇa has been doing it since many years) carries the image of Goddess Bhuvaneśvari Devī. Bhuvaneśvari (a name of Maḥiṣāsura-mardini), incidentally, is the goddess of Mysore, and she is none other than Durgā. She has a temple situated on the hill in Mysore—the Chamundi Hill. There is also the mythological legend, saying that it was on this hill that Mother Cāmuṇḍā killed the demon Maḥiṣa. In a Bengali article published several years ago in *Desh*, a famous researcher who conducted a thorough research on where exactly Durgā worship started, says that Mysore is perhaps one of the oldest places of Mother worship. And the reason? It was here that the Mother killed the demon. Apart from the procession, a carnival providing the latest gadgets and amenities to the general public with attractive displays and amusements for all age groups is also being held since 1877. Celebrated musicians,



The Cāmuṇḍeśvari temple gate

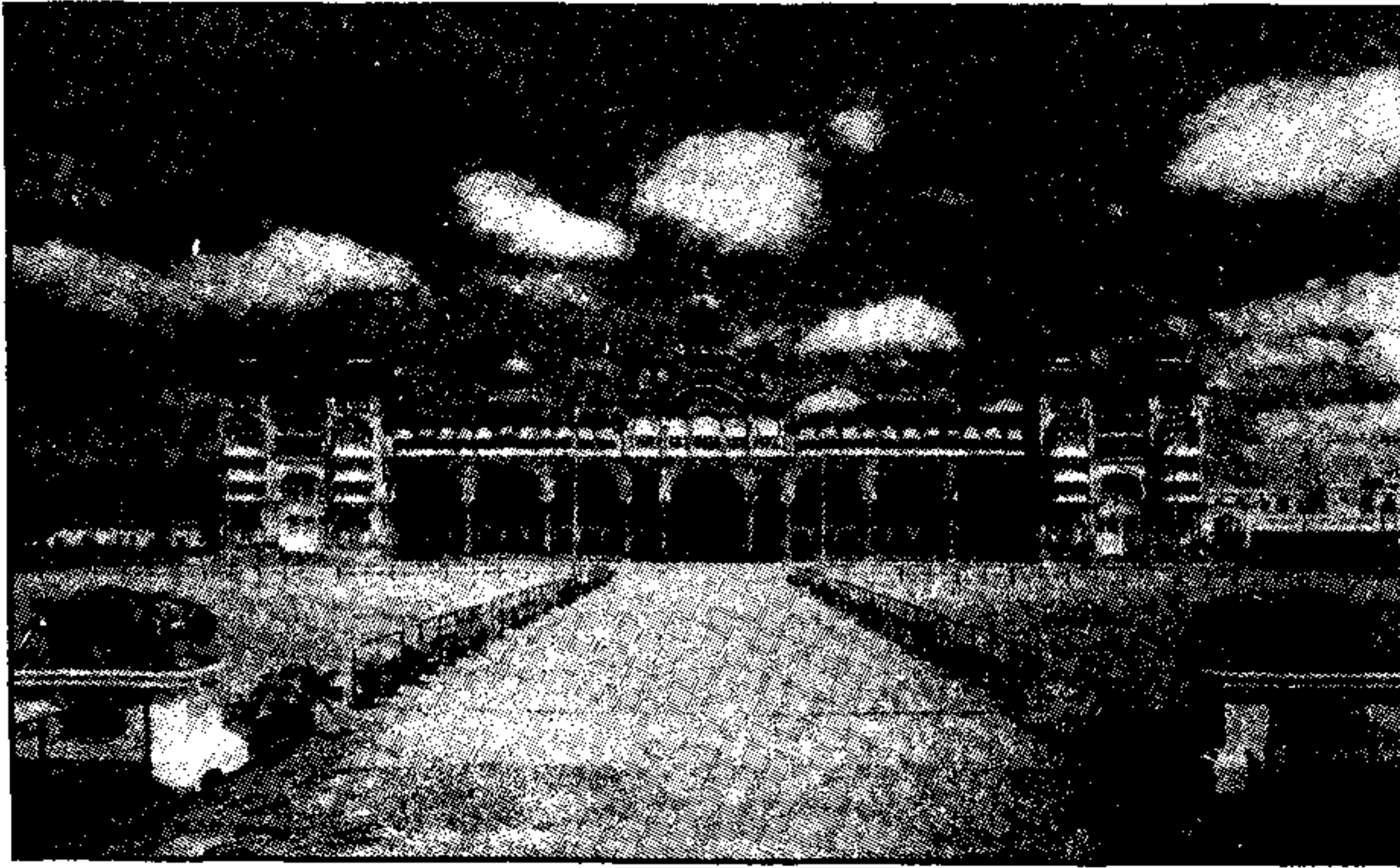
dance and theatre groups perform and add colour to the celebrations.

What Kings did during Dasarā

What exactly would take place in Mysore during the time of the kings on Navarātri is interesting. We should remember one important point. The kings of Mysore would begin their war-expeditions against enemies and also attempt to expand their boundaries on the Vijaya-daśamī day. More about this later. So, Vijayadaśamī, the tenth day of Navarātri, is special for Mysore kings. What they would do during Navarātri is detailed here.

The Divine Mother Durgā would be worshipped on all these nine days of Navarātri as Śailaputrī, Brahma-cārīṇī, Candraghaṇṭā, Kūṣmāṇḍā, Skandamātā, Kātyāyanī, Kālarātri, Mahāgaurī, and Siddhidā. On the first day, the king, after having a ceremonial bath, would perform purificatory rites. He would then worship his family diety, Goddess Cāmuṇḍā, in the palace along with the worship of Lord Ganeśa, and would wear the ceremonial, sacred wrist-band which signified his intention to perform the sacred pūjā with devotion and dedication. He would

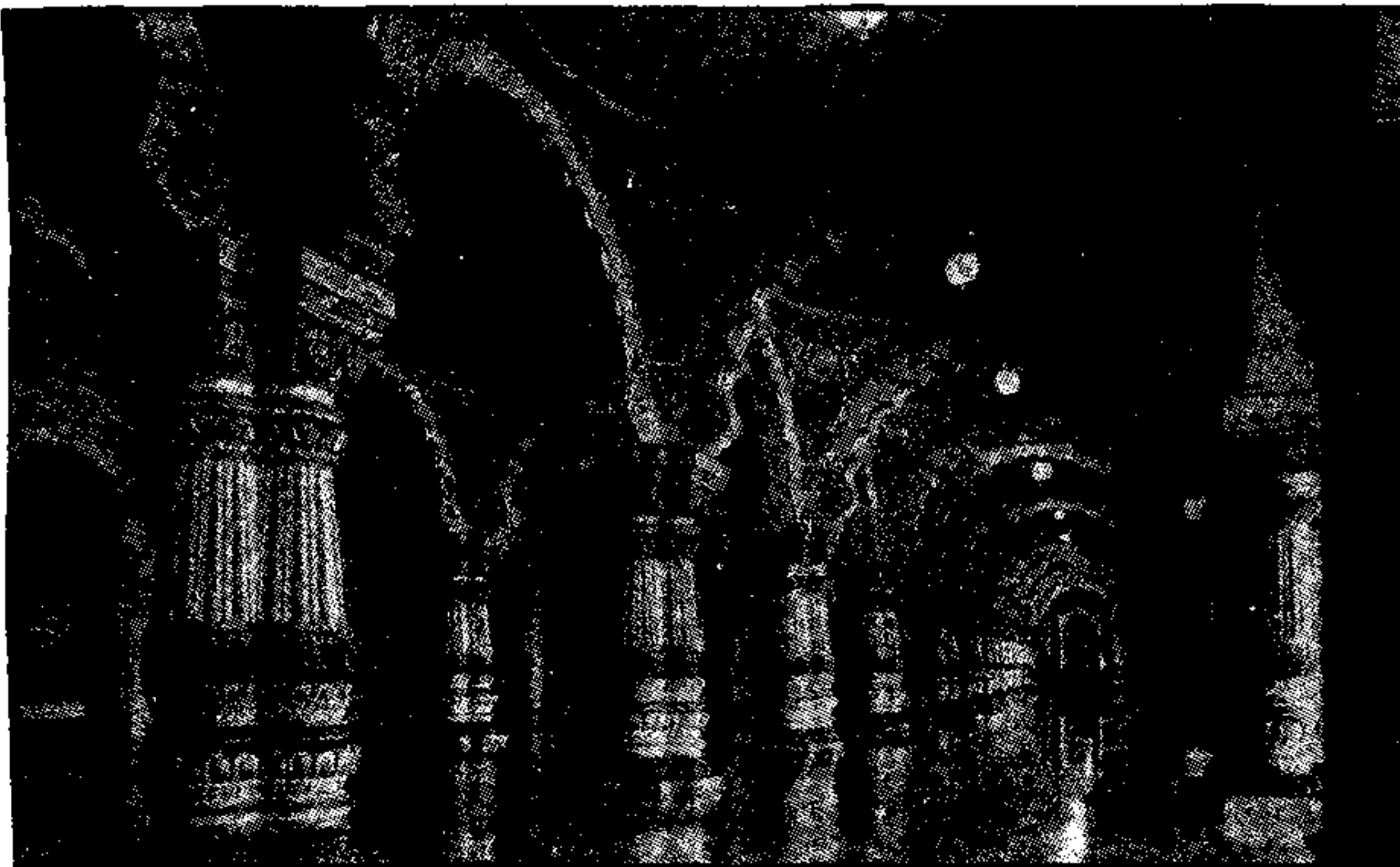
then enter the durbar to the accompaniment of sacred chants and music. The tradition of the durbar, an adaption from the Mughal emperors, was first introduced by Mummaḍi Krishnarāja Wāḍiyar in September 1805, and



The Mysore Palace...

it is an assembly of the royal court, attended by the invitees, chief citizens, members of the royal family, palace officials, royal priests, and the intelligentsia.

After this, the king would worship the *navagrahas*, the nine sacred deities, and then the sacred *kaḷaśa*. He would also worship the throne as per the *Kālikā Purāṇa* injunctions. He would then circumambulate the throne thrice and ascend it at an auspicious moment. Later royal insignia and sword were presented to him amid prayers to *Kārya-śrī Gaurī*. At that moment all the lights in the palace would come alive, and there would be the royal 21-gun salute.



...and its durbar hall

After this, the king would sit on the throne and receive royal guests. Soon after this, the royal elephant and horse would receive ablutions and worship. The court com-père would present the king with the offerings received from various temples and religious centres (*mathas*). This was followed by Vedic

chants, sprinkling of holy waters and blessings by the royal priests. The vassal kings, dewans, army chiefs and other royal staff would come and offer their respects to the throne in earlier times. Musical instruments would start an en-

semble accompanied by dance performances, and the blowing of conches and trumpets with the parade of uniformed soldiers and other staff. The beautifully decorated royal elephant arrived showering roses on the assembled guests; and the royal horse, equally

well-decorated, would bend down on its knees in salutation to the throne. The assembly would leave the court after bowing down to the king once again and the queen, accompanied by the other royal ladies, would come to pay obeisance to the king who would share the offerings received from the temples with them. The queen mother and the other senior ladies would bless him good health. The king would then leave the durbar hall and partake of the noon meal with the royal guests, after praying to the Goddess once again.

The same procedure would be followed on all the Navarātri evenings with the addition of acrobatic feats, wrestling bouts by champions, fireworks display and other entertain-

ments, watched by the teeming masses everyday. While the durbar would be held in the outer court the worship would be done within the palace. The king would worship Goddess Sarasvatī on the seventh day and Mahiṣāsura-

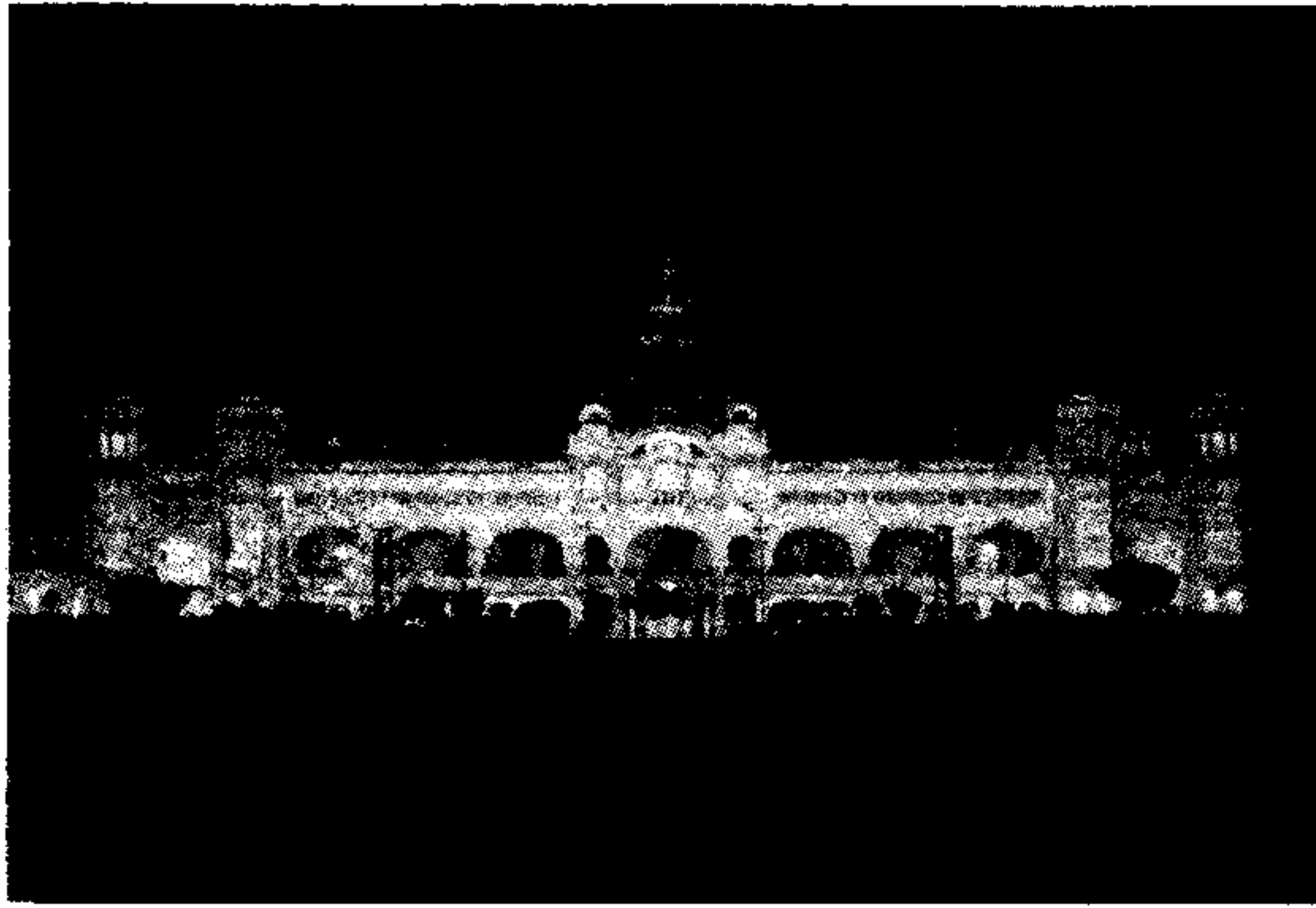
mardini on the eighth. On the Mahānavamī day, the royal sword would be worshipped ceremoniously, signifying the worship of all the weapons and would be taken out in procession accompanied by the army, elephants, horses, camels and the royal retinue. The

sword would be received by the king at the palace gates and kept at the feet of the Divine Mother. The king would then worship a local deity — an aspect of the Divine Mother —

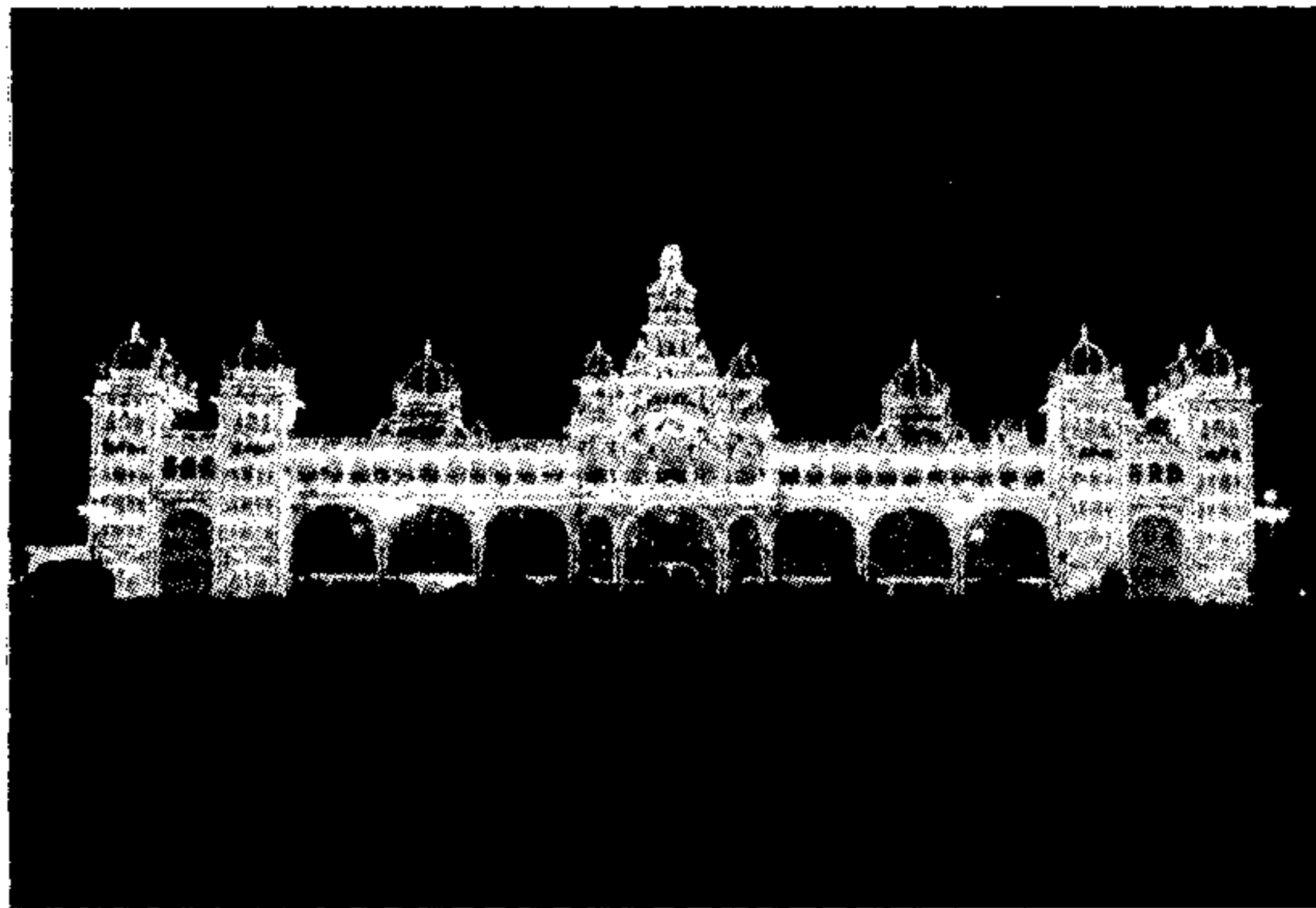
named as Amala-devī Amma. Special worship, Caṇḍī worship, fire sacrifice (*homa*) with *pūrṇāhuti* would all be performed with great devotion at the Chamundi Hill temple. The assembly rooms of the palace and the royal insignia would also be worshipped. The king,

after performing all these ceremonies, would remove the sacred wristband, signifying the close of the rituals.

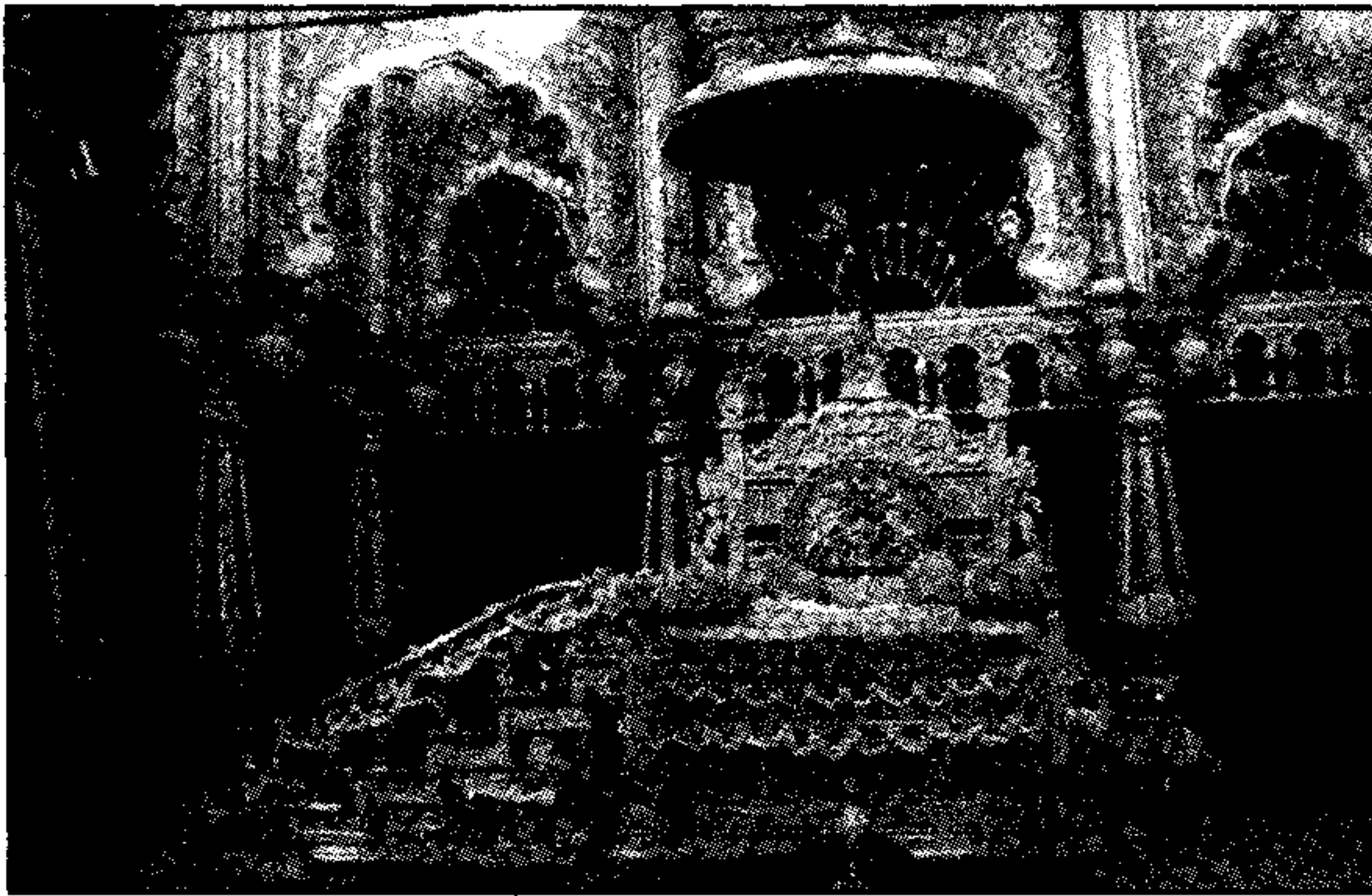
On the Chamundi Hill, the Divine Mother would be served in many ways on all these days. She would be taken out of the



The illuminated Mysore Palace



The Mysore Palace all lighted up for the Dasarā festival



The golden throne

temple, for instance, and using beautifully lighted floats, would be taken for boat rides in the lake adjacent to the temple. Thousands of devotees would come from everywhere to see these ceremonies.

The Navarātri celebrations would reach their culmination with the grandest Vijayadaśamī celebrations, also called in popular parlance as *Jambū Savāri*. The grandeur and magnificence of this event has popularized the Navarātri celebrations of Mysore both in India and abroad. On this day, after ablutions, the king would worship the royal sword again and place it in a palanquin, would offer an ash gourd smeared with vermilion as sacrifice to it. He would follow the grand procession, seated on the historically famous golden howdah bedecked with the rarest gems and pearls, which was carried by the royal elephant. The royal throne on which the king used to sit is made of gold and is said to have been used by Dharmarāja, the illustrious Pāṇḍava king. It was rediscovered by the great sage Vidyāranya during the establishment of the Vijayanagara empire and was subsequently presented to the Mysore kings. There's also a legend which says that this very throne is the Vikramāditya throne.

The beginning of the traditional Vijayadaśamī procession, which is continued even today with the same—if not more—fervour and devotion, would be announced with

a 21-round gun salute. The important streets of Mysore city would be decorated beautifully with electric bulbs. Millions of people from everywhere would stand on both sides of the route — as they do today also — to witness the grand procession. After a mile-long walk, the procession would reach the Bannimantap site, where the king, after a bath, would worship the śamī (or *banni* in Kannada) tree. This śamī tree is supposed to have been used by the Pāṇḍavas to hide their arms during their one-year period of forced incognito life. Arjuna is said to have retrieved his bow

Gāṇḍiva from this tree in order to help Uttara Kumāra defeat the marauding Kaurava army. Worshipping this tree before embarking on any war adventure was customary for kings of this dynasty. The Wāḍiyar king would return to his palace after viewing the wonderful torchlight parade and the grand fireworks display at Bannimantap. That would conclude the Vijayadaśamī festivities.

The next day, after the Goddess Cāmuṇḍeśvarī would be worshipped with great devotion, the king would honour distinguished personalities by conferring titles on them. That would mark the close of the grand ten-day-long celebrations during the days of the kings.

What the Old Tradition Signifies

To the keen observer, it becomes evident that this festival was a local ritual earlier, wherein people worshipped their weapons and Mother Nature, seeking victory and prosperity. This was assimilated by the followers of the Vedic religion who gave it a broader framework. The festival began to be observed with religious fervour, austerity, and in accordance with the various scriptural injunctions. Yet it is at the same time a festival of the warriors, propitiating the Divine to gain victory. We find a harmonious blend of the rural and the urban, of chivalry and devotion in this unique festival and so it is popular amongst all

the sections of the society irrespective of caste, creed or social status.

The Modern Navarātrī Festival

What was being done during the Wadiyar kings has been revived by the Government of Karnataka once again, to the joy of one and all. Nowadays, instead of the king's sitting on the howdah, it is Mother Durgā, Cāmuṇḍā, who sits in the golden howdah fixed to the back of the royal elephant. The main roads of the city are all decorated as usual. The Chamundi Hill too is decorated with lights. The Divine Mother is brought down from the Hill. To worship the deity of the city in this manner, by making her the centre of attention during the ten-day-long festival, is a worthwhile effort as this will lead to the supreme good of the whole population. This festival, irrespective of caste, creed or social status, has become a festival of the state and it is perhaps an unprecedented and isolated gesture for a government to celebrate the worship of the Divine Mother officially. Hope and pray this will continue, to the well-being of one and all.

Sans the kingly touch, the present-day Navarātrī festival is marked by daily musical performances by world-renowned musicians at the palace, the setting up of the usual exhi-

bition which attracts millions, and the Vijayadaśamī parade which, as we said above, is centred around the Divine Mother. The entire Vijayadaśamī procession is colourful, with numerous tableaux, dances, march past, cultural presentations, show of martial expertise, etc. The entire procession is televised with a beautiful commentary, which narrates the state's glory in a precise manner.



Mother Cāmuṇḍā leading the Jambu Savari procession

The Navarātrī festival of Mysore has gained importance as a beacon to the cultural diversity and religious greatness of Karnataka. By patronizing the event, the government has succeeded in projecting the rich heritage of the land, thereby giving a boost to tourism and folk arts. Time has not reduced the value of such socio-cultural events, and man in his pursuit of easy money and temporal desire cannot relegate spiritual ideals to a secondary position. Especially the natural calamities everywhere around only go to show

the importance of religious and spiritual traditions. Mass worship of the deity of any particular region is so very important. The social fabric must be strengthened from within by inculcating such values and festivals like Navarātrī have been accomplishing this very judiciously down the ages. □

the importance of religious and spiritual traditions. Mass worship of the deity of any particular region is so very important. The social fabric must be strengthened from within by inculcating such values and festivals like Navarātrī have been accomplishing this very judiciously down the ages. □

One must practise spiritual disciplines such as worship. ... As one gets the fragrance of a flower by handling it, as one gets the smell of sandalwood by rubbing it against a stone, in the same way one gets spiritual awakening by constantly thinking of God. But you can realize Him right now, if you become desireless.

—Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

Biotechnology and Moral Imagination

MARGARET MCLEAN

Margaret McLean is Director, Biotechnology and Healthcare Ethics, Markkula Center of Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University, California, USA. In this beautiful article, McLean questions the credibility of genetics in human life. This article is a gift from AHIMSA.

One of the things that ethicists tend to do is to try to be precise with our words, so let me start with my view of biotechnology. Biotechnology is creating new situations for us in which we perceive that we need to make new and difficult decisions, and we base these on our values and visions of ourselves, for our communities, and for the environment in which we live. Think about genetic testing, for example. Twenty-five years ago this was not a concern. Twenty years from now it will probably be a routine part of your healthcare. Think about the current setting, about biotechnological advances that we are coping with, but also about their impact on the future. The pivotal question is: what kind of future are we building right now? What are the consequences of what we are doing right now?

Technology makes us nervous, and we fear not only the results of it: What will it do to me? What will being subjected to genetic tests on a routine basis do to me? How will it affect my getting insurance or a job? We are also concerned with the imperative that seems to come with every technological advance, the 'if we can, we will' which becomes 'if we can, we must.' As an ethicist, I worry about these imperatives. Just because we can, should we? How do we distinguish between 'can' and 'should', between our ability to do something, having permission to do it, and the imperative to do it?

Nothing exemplifies the age in which we find ourselves—the 21st century, the technological age—more than change. Every scientific and technological advance causes change, for us as individuals, for society, for the insti-

tutions with which we deal; and those changes raise questions. And a lot of those questions, maybe most of them, are questions of ethics. Ought we to know an individual's genetic makeup, and if we do not know, ought we to change that, for a good reason, for any reason, for no reason? These are the kinds of questions that genetic engineering and biotechnology have started to raise for us.

The age we live in requires us to be flexible, to have a bit of give and take in order to reflect on and deal constructively with new problems or even whole new classes of problems. I saw the première of Andre Previn's *Streetcar Named Desire*. It occurred to me that Blanche Dubois, one of the key characters in Tennessee William's play on which the opera is based, is dealing throughout the play with her inability to change. She is a Southern woman in 1940 who has lost her family, home, her job, and everything that she expected to be true about her life and her future. She falters, she shatters, and in the end she is left alone to rely on the kindness of strangers. We need to be able to deal with change, or risk shattering our moral selves. We need to have flexibility, and one of the ways we can develop that is through what I call moral imagination.

Moral imagination focuses on three things, at least in this instance. First, different frameworks for understanding. Moral imagination recognizes that there is more than one way to look at an issue, more than one frame for our concerns about technology, for example. If death is understood as a friend, that frame and its consequences are different from understanding death as an enemy. These

framings are important. Second, it focuses on our common human experiences of responsibilities we have to each other and to the environment in which we live. Third, it focuses on stories and narratives, which help us to make sense of our lives and of human action, to acknowledge and understand what we value, and to answer questions about who we are, where we came from, and where we are going.

If we are going to look at the ethical edge of biotechnology, ethics is going to ask us to focus on who we are in the world, and what we do in it. It has to do with being and with doing. It asks us to focus on our response and responsibility to each other and to the environment. It asks about relationships with other human beings and with the world in which we find ourselves. It asks to move toward relationships that are of high quality. This asks us to justify particular actions. Can we justify the use of genetic testing? Can we justify its voluntary use, or its mandated use? Do we search for and practise virtuous traits of moral character? Are we persons of integrity, of honesty, of compassion? What does that mean in our doing? And can we imaginatively perceive possibilities of acting in a particular situation? Ethics wants us to be able to deepen our understanding, to broaden the common ground we share, and to promote relationships of quality and well-being, not just for ourselves but for the environment in which we live and work and exist. It asks that we do this not just by following rules, but by discerning what is actually occurring in the particular situation in which we find ourselves.

Who are we, what do we need, what do

we desire? What do others need and desire? How do we relate to one another? How does biotechnology impinge on our ability to relate to one another? How, for example, would knowing my genetic profile—that I had a gene that would shorten my life—impinge on my ability to relate to others? Would it change my family structure or my friendships?

What actions are possible? One of the things technology does for us is to open up new possibilities, and these are exciting and dynamic and interesting, and they scare us. They are causes for concern, and we worry about them. Ethics asks us to work in that place of uneasiness and disease. We reassure ourselves that a good outcome to our concerns is 'likely', but this word 'likely' is problematic. We just don't know. We take our best guess. But 'likely' also makes us nervous, and gives us pause.

Ethical questions—and there are probably a dozen of these for each person in this room—ask us to consider many things in relation to biotechnology. How does it affect the relationships between individuals, and between individuals and their environment? How ought we to live? How does it help to understand individuals, institutions, and the world? Does it change our understanding of each other? Does it change our understanding of community?

Out of these questions, what I consider to be the most important question of all is the one which will have the greatest effect on what biotechnology actually does to our world. That question is, how do I imaginatively envision a responsible biotechnological future? □

With every act of love and sympathy, every performance of duty, every observance of morality, man is trying to go beyond himself, by feeling himself one with the universe. He who lives up to this truth has truly renounced himself. He who knows not this truth, but tries to become a perfectly moral man in thought, word, and deed, is unconsciously living up to that truth.

—Swami Saradananda

The Great Devotee - 3

We were narrating Vaikuntha Dāsa's life. We saw that Vaikuntha Dāsa desired to donate cows to some poor brahmins; the brahmins came, took the cows, and went away.

The next day, when the priest of the temple opened the sanctum, he saw some cows standing in line in there, and was stunned! Vaikuntha Dāsa too came and saw the strange sight. He also saw the holy threads he had tied to their necks. He understood the trick of the Lord: even before Varada could inform the brahmins, He Himself had come in the guise of a few brahmins and had received the cows! With tears rolling down his cheeks, Vaikuntha Dāsa sang a song to the effect that the Cowherd hadn't given up the desire to tend cows even now! He brought back the cows and, when Varada brought the brahmins in the morning, he gave them away.

One of the most trying events in Vaikuntha Dāsa's life was concerning a woman. A poor Saiva couple became Vaikuntha Dāsa's disciples. One day, the husband took ill and passed away. The poor lady, called Mādamma, was left alone. Snatching the opportunity, her relatives took away all her possessions, and also drove her away from her ancestral house. A young woman can't remain on the streets. So she came to Vaikuntha Dāsa. Though he hesitated, his pious wife Soumya Nāyaki readily welcomed Mādamma. Mādamma became a great help. All that she had to do was prepare garlands for Lord Keshava in the temple, and attend to some other small chores. Mādamma was ever eager to serve her spiritual master and mistress. For Vaikuntha and his wife, Mādamma became a daughter. The town of Belur was not without hooligans and ruffians. So out of fear she would never stir out of her house.

Meanwhile, a rich man began pestering Vaikuntha Dāsa: he had no issue and so no one to inherit his vast property. Vaikuntha avoided him for one whole year, saying that he was not a magician or miracle-monger. But the rich man went on praying for his blessings. When it became impossible for Vaikuntha Dāsa to drive away the rich man, he prayed to Krishna and placed a fruit at His feet. Uttering some mantras on the fruit, he handed it over to Mādamma and said, 'Dear daughter, will you please go to the rich man and give it to him?' A tiny fruit for a rich man? Mādamma was puzzled and asked what it was. Vaikuntha replied: 'It has some power and, by eating it, the rich man will have a son.'

The devil entered Mādamma's heart then. On the way to the rich man's she pondered: 'I am alone. My virtual parents may go away tomorrow. Who'll look after me then?' She went to the corner of a street and, unseen by anyone, ate away the fruit. Though scared at what she had done, she thought, 'If father so wishes, he can create a hundred such fruits. If I confess to having eaten it, he will smile.'

But Vaikuntha Dāsa was alarmed to know what had happened. Both husband and wife were worried for some time and finally decided to leave it to the will of Krishna. When the rich man came again, Vaikuntha Dāsa told him: 'It's not the will of Krishna that you should have a son.' Hearing this, the rich man became furious and decided to take revenge.

The testing time of Vaikuntha began now. Suspecting foul things of him, people shunned him. The rich man had a big hand in spreading calumny. Vaikuntha Dāsa and his wife cared little for public opinion and served their daughter and her miraculous son well.

When Vaikuntha Dāsa wanted to per-

form his father's annual *śrāddha* ceremony, no brahmin would come. Vaikuntha Dāsa was helpless. He prayed to Lord Keshava fervently. He tried to send his disciple Varada to a distant village to bring some brahmin, but Varada returned, saying that the river was flooded and he couldn't cross it.

Soon someone knocked at the door. Vaikuntha opened it. It was an unknown brahmin. He said he had come from a very far-off country, and had decided to spend some days here. He most gladly agreed to help Vaikuntha perform the *śrāddha* ceremony. Overjoyed at Keshava's sport, Vaikuntha offered everything he had kept to this stranger. The brahmin went away happily.

When the temple priest opened the temple door the next morning, he saw a new set of clothes, rice, bananas, coconut and many other offerings at the Lord's feet. He checked the locks; none had broken in to offer them. Though reluctant to invite Vaikuntha Dāsa, the priest knew that Vaikuntha alone had the answer to such miracles. So he sent word to him. Vaikuntha came running to the temple, suspecting something *beautiful*. What he had imagined on the way had come true: the strange brahmin who had come the previous day to his house was Lord Keshava Himself!

The Lord had achieved two things through this incident. He had taught His dear son Vaikuntha to be careful in the future not to use extrasensory powers to achieve worldly ends; and He had also taught the brahmins of the town that Vaikuntha was immaculate. The people of the town understood that Vaikuntha Dāsa was beyond all suspicion. Once again people began to come in great numbers to him to listen to his songs and discourses.

It is said that Vaikuntha Dāsa had a desire to visit Srirangam, the holy seat of Vishnu and the abode of Alvārs and saints. He started on the journey all alone. Lord Keshava, however, didn't like his son's going away, not taking the poor wife with him. So Vaikuntha Dāsa had to endure immense trouble on the way. There were tigers, leopards, snakes, etc on his way

the very first evening. Therefore Vaikuntha could hardly cover even a few miles. At night, as he took rest in a wayside temple, he saw a dream: 'Am I not there in Belur? Why are you going elsewhere?' And Vaikuntha realized that it was all his Keshava's play. So he returned home. They say that Vaikuntha never went out of Belur since then. The first ever journey had failed.

His contemporaries, like the great Karnataka saint Purandara Dāsa, met him at Belur and enjoyed his spiritual company. The other great saint, Vādirāja, had also visited Vaikuntha. Though Vaikuntha Dāsa considered himself very small compared to the great Vādirāja, the latter considered himself an insignificant person before Vaikuntha. The songs these two humble saints sung during their meetings have come down to us, and they display their mutual respect. The two saints would discuss the glories of Krishna for hours at a stretch. It is said that Krishna, unable to resist the temptation of being with His two great devotees, would perform some new trick every day. Once when Vādirāja came to his house, he saw a sweet-looking child on Vaikuntha's lap. 'Who's this child, holy sir?' asked Vādirāja. Vaikuntha felt extremely shy because owing to his preoccupation with Baby Krishna he had not stood up and welcomed Vādirāja.

Soon Soumya Nāyaki passed away. Vaikuntha Dāsa became old; his disciples took good care of him. He became more and more indrawn. On occasion, no one was allowed to enter his room. What pained him most was that he could no more bathe in the river or go to the temple. But the Lord would console him in many ways. When Vaikuntha Dāsa would hear the sound of conchs and bells of the temple, he would stand up with folded hands. Even on the day of his passing, the saint stood up with great difficulty, prayed to the Lord, uttered the holy name 'Keshava' and sat down. Those were his last moments. They say that as soon as Vaikuntha Dāsa died, most of Lord Keshava's ornaments in the temple fell down of themselves! □

Book Reviews

SHABDA-KATHA (Bengali): By Kshitish Chandra Chattopadhyay. Published by Rabindra Bharati University, 5 Dwarakanath Thakur Lane, Calcutta 700007. 1998. Pp. 30+108. Rs.50.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IDEAS—VIVEKANANDA, GANDHI AND SUBHAS BOSE: By Prof Sankari Prasad Basu. Published by Sterling Publishers, 10 Green Park Extension, New Delhi, 110016. 2000. Pp. 154. Rs.375.

A word about the author of the book under review. As a teacher and scholar, Dr Kshitish Chandra Chatterji (1896-61) became a legend during his lifetime. He taught comparative philology and Sanskrit at the University of Calcutta for 35 years. He is internationally known for his scholarly works, which include *Technical Terms and Technique of Sanskrit Grammar* (1948, his DLitt dissertation), and *Vedic Selections*, both published by the Calcutta University; and his journals, *Calcutta Oriental Journal* and *Manjusha* (Sanskrit), which contributed greatly to the cause of Sanskrit.

Kshitish Chatterji's *Shabda-Katha* ('The Romance of Words') is a wonderful book on Bengali usage. A large number of Bengali words (of Sanskrit origin), from *otaprotā* to *mātula* are discussed from the viewpoints of both Sanskrit and Bengali grammar, and although the author is a great Sanskritist, it goes to his credit that he attaches more importance to Bengali grammar in this book on the Bengali language, and that is as it should be. His account of semantic changes is as fascinating as his story of Bengali proper names and simplification of the rules of *sandhi*. He quotes profusely not only from Bengali and Sanskrit writers but also from Western writers ranging from Shakespeare, Dickens and P.G. Wodehouse to Tucker, Whitney and Fowler. And the book scintillates with wit and humour. Who could have thought that a philological work could be so immensely interesting and such delightful reading? All teachers and students of languages and all enlightened general readers will read this unique and marvellous book with profit and pleasure.

The book was originally published in 1947. This greatly enlarged, recently published second edition has been compiled with loving care by the author's worthy son, Dr Visvanath Chatterjee.

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Swami Vivekananda is one of those rare personalities who, by virtue of his militant faith and utmost self-confidence, shaped the destiny of the world for centuries to come. Though he was not a politician, he played a great role in inspiring the country to fight for political freedom, to work for social changes, and to eradicate social evils. Capitalism, imperialism, industrialism, and science were the notable characteristics of that century, and they made an irresistible impact on all parts of our planet and in all areas of our life. Our culture, our character, in fact almost everything was at stake. And Swami Vivekananda saved those things and thus saved India. One remarkable thing about Swamiji is the spontaneous ease with which he could achieve a transition from the sphere of metaphysical thinking to the apparently distinct sphere of social and economic pulls and pressures. The metaphysical was not for him entirely beyond the range of the physical. On the contrary, in his scheme of ideas metaphysical realization could help provide an ideology for action in a society that lay tottered and fragmented, or in an economy where the oppressed, overcome by unreasonable fear, were submitting to their oppressors.

How different was Swamiji who had renounced the world but who felt, every time he entered a cave, some force before long threw him out, back in the course of men—suffering, and even sneaky men! A feeling for all sentient beings was in Vivekananda's very blood, but it was not only compassion that he preached, compassion to *jivas*, but the categorical imperative of service to alleviate suffering, the obligation to the Shiva in them all. The motto he held, *tattvamasi* ('That art Thou') equated service to others with service to oneself, a concept of duty that, if widely practised, could transform our world. Vivekananda truly contemplated a synthesis of the western concept of social equality and democracy, and the Indian spiritual values based on the belief in the fundamental divinity of everyone and everything.

Prof Sankari Prasad Basu, an erudite scholar on Vivekananda and contemporary Indian society, in

the valuable book under review titled *Economic and Political Ideas: Vivekananda, Gandhi, Subhas Bose* has brought into limelight Swamiji's economic and political ideas in a new perspective, substantiated by thoroughly researched materials. Although Swami Vivekananda is the principal character of Prof Basu's dissertations, several Indian personalities including scientists, politicians, poets, industrialists and statesmen with their enlightened observations have enriched the book.

The book consists of three sections. The first is primarily devoted to Vivekananda's multi-dimensional character in establishing humanism which is the bedrock of all social and economic thought of his time. Indeed, he was the bridge between tradition and modernity. No one before Vivekananda produced the charter of human emancipation in his inimitable language: 'Mukti, instead of Heaven, Enlightenment, instead of Salvation.' But his Vedantic socialism was not an Utopian imagination. It owes its origin in the thought and culture of India. According to Vivekananda, mind is the only source of happiness and for this we do not require material prosperity of the Western model, but a Vedantic mind which can combine the material and the spiritual—a true synthetic philosophy of life.

The second section of the book relates to Swamiji's attitude towards the Indian National Congress. It is significant to note that Congress was just seven years old when Vivekananda blazed into glory. Of the Indian leaders, Vivekananda found in Tilak the real man to lead India in the political field. Because he found in him a man at once radical when dealing with imperialist opponents and constructive when working amidst his hapless countrymen.

The influence of Vivekananda on Gandhiji was not in the methods of struggle but in the spirit that called for complete dedication. In the words of Prof Basu, Vivekananda was a stern critic of the Congress policy of appeasement, the vain oratory of the leaders and their petition-making efforts with folded hands to the British rules and he rightly roused the strongest feelings for nationality. Although Vivekananda could not approve of all the activities of Gandhiji, he had got great respect for him for leading India's non-violent struggle against the oppressive British rule.

The third and final section of the book has been devoted to Subhas Chandra Basu, who has been to the people of India the leader of hope in an age of disillusionment, the like of whom has not been found in the annals of India's long struggle for freedom. Subhas Chandra Basu was a class by himself. With the renaissance behind him, he grew up in harmony with the evolution of India's national movement. Although a rebel at heart, he was

a pure humanitarian, a *parivrājaka* and social reformer in the manner and spirit of Swami Vivekananda. Indeed he was the pioneering force for initiating national planning in India. Widely acclaimed in the intellectual circles of India for his prophetic vision and rational approach towards industrial reconstruction, Netaji was persona-non-grata to Gandhiji. Subhas had to suffer for his independent views and courage of conviction. Prof Basu has rightly pointed out that Subhas Basu's refusal to toe the line chalked out by Gandhiji led to his break with the Congress. Subhas Chandra Basu owed a lot to Swamiji, who, according to him, was the real torchbearer of Indian nationalism.

The book under review is a very important addition to those scholars who are really interested in doing some serious research work on Vivekananda and contemporary Indian nationalism. Prof Basu's analytical and critical approach to the problem accompanied by his inimitable style of presentation is really commendable. I wish all-round success for the book.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

SRĪMAD BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ — GŪDH-ĀRTHA PRAKĀSHIKĀ (Chapter One): Interpreted in English verse by Shibaram Debarao Ubhayaker. Copies can be had from the author at 15 Palace Road, Bangalore 560052.

This book is a poetic translation of the *Gītā*. It has a long introduction about the importance of the *Gītā*.

MUKUNDAMĀLĀ OF KULASEKHARA: Translated by Kalluri Suryanarayana. Published by Sankhyayana Vidya Parishat, H.No. 2-12-34 Annapoorna Colony, Uppal, Hyderabad 500039. 2001. Pp. 56. Rs.45.